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Improving the Effectiveness of Public Meetings and Hearings

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INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, in keeping with the spirit of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, effective interaction between transportation agencies and the public has become a significant factor in determining the parameters within which any transportation project can be designed and implemented. Whereas a proposal's viability once depended almost wholly on engineering and design criteria, the transportation planning and project development process today closely reflects a new set of values based on a combination of changing fiscal conditions, increasing environmental and social awareness, use of multi- and intermodal systems and technology, public-private cooperation, and a re-assessment of how transportation decisions are and should be made.

Accordingly, agencies throughout the country have attempted to develop techniques and programs to both facilitate community outreach and effectively utilize community input. The result, to date, is a compendium of public involvement processes and activities that reflects not only a conscientious approach to a new and difficult challenge but also considerable experimentation and creativity. Not surprisingly, some of the most innovative—and effective—public involvement activities that have been documented are those that relate to public meetings and hearings. As the cornerstone of public involvement efforts in virtually every State, the meeting/hearing component has been given the greatest amount of attention, analysis, and evaluation.

For this reason, this guidebook (and the workshops to which it is a companion) focuses specifically on the development and implementation of creative, realistic approaches to the preparation, conduct, and follow-up of meetings and hearings. Designed as a "state of the art" report and introduction to a variety of techniques and processes, the guidebook is based on the practical community involvement experience of its authors, combined with a review of public meeting and hearing materials developed by a cross-section of State highway and transportation departments. It also acknowledges the relationship of meetings and hearings to a variety of other public involvement techniques, particularly those that take advantage of new technology such as computerized mailing lists, on-line services, and interactive television, as well as those that aim to provide easier, more flexible ways for under-represented groups such as ethnic, minority, disability, and low-income groups to participate.

For the most part, the guidebook does not deal with the theoretical aspects of public involvement. Instead, it attempts to relate the viability and effectiveness of an overall program to such basic meeting and hearing elements as appropriateness of notification procedures; format; exhibits; handouts; presentations; and meeting conductor or hearing officer.

In line with its practical orientation, the guidebook focuses on relevance and the need to treat each project, plan, agency, and community as a unique entity with special resources and unavoidable constraints. It therefore functions literally as a "sampler" of techniques presented for consideration without recommendation or disavowal. The authors hope that the guidebook, as a mechanism for sharing experiences, will be of value to practitioners with diversified needs and interests.

Chapter 1. MEETINGS

It is commonly acknowledged that meetings are the pivotal component of a public involvement program. They provide a framework for constructively interacting with the public; an opportunity for developing agency credibility; and a mechanism for obtaining, evaluating, and incorporating public input into transportation decision-making on an ongoing basis.

But the catchword "meeting" contains a number of pitfalls, the most serious being the tendency to substitute the *fact* of a meeting for its substantive possibilities. All too often, a meeting is held without adequate consideration of its overall objective or of the specific agenda, format, and presentation that would most appropriately complement that objective. The result, as might be expected, is unproductive—and frustrating—for agency and community alike!

Clearly, there is no boilerplate formula for planning a successful meeting. The multiplicity of subjective and objective factors, the variety of available formats (both tried-and-true and innovative), and the inherent flexibility in the concept itself make each meeting a very individual event. There are, however, guidelines for assuring that all aspects of meeting preparation, conduct, and follow-up receive the thoughtful and comprehensive planning they deserve.

This chapter focuses on these guidelines, as well as on techniques, processes, and specific activities that have proven successful for a variety of States throughout the country. To supplement our discussion, we have included a checklist of essential meeting preparation tasks as **Appendix I.**

First, let us start with a

DEFINITION:

In this guidebook, the term "meeting" is used to describe all structured opportunities for face-to-face interaction between an agency and a group of citizens, except the formal public hearing. As a specialized type of meeting, with significant differences in concept, purpose, format, and timing, the public hearing will be dealt with as a separate and distinct entity. For more information on hearings, please see **Chapter 2: Hearings.**

Although the panorama of public meetings is becoming increasingly diversified and complex, all meetings—regardless of scope, purpose, or format—share the common objective of ***encouraging communication*** between as large a cross-section of agency and community people as possible. Within this broad definition, a number of significant sub-objectives emerge. At one or more stages of a transportation planning or project development process, meetings should be held to:

- ***Inform*** the public of the present status, future developments, and anticipated time frames of the process. Early information meetings not only provide the basis for a constructive ongoing public involvement program but also make it easier for an agency to identify potential problems and controversial issues before they reach crisis proportion. Many agencies find that meeting with the community at the beginning permits development of a more realistic work program, decreases the likelihood of rumors based on distorted or incorrect information, and ultimately results in savings of time, money, and people-power that might otherwise have been spent on further examination of unacceptable options.

- ***Identify groups and individuals*** that may have specific input and/or particular perspectives of value to the transportation planning and project development processes and ***develop mechanisms*** for ongoing interaction with these people. It is particularly important to include those segments of the population that have been traditionally under-represented, such as ethnic, minority, and low-income groups, as well as the disability community. Meetings conducted early in the process often help an agency focus on people and organizations that might constructively contribute to a technical or civic advisory group, project workshop, charrette, or brainstorming session. In addition, the introduction of a community-based group of activists and technical specialists to one another creates a commonality of interest that often results in creative solutions to controversial problems.

- ***Update*** the public on the progress of ongoing studies; ***receive community input and recommendations;*** and ***provide feedback*** concerning previous local input. A series of structured public meetings at strategic points in the transportation process provides an effective means of communicating with large segments of the community on a regular basis. Several States have found that the project development process lends itself to major meetings relating to:
  1) project scope and objectives;
  2) alternatives under consideration;
  3) potential environmental impacts; and
  4) probable relocation and right-of-way implications.

  In addition to offering the reassurance of continuity, these meetings help to publicly monitor a project's evolution. They also serve to bolster an agency's image and credibility—particularly if it is possible to pinpoint areas in which local input has resulted in a modified proposal, a change in approach, or the elimination or addition of an alternative.

- ***Monitor*** the attitudes and concerns of interested and potentially affected segments of the public for the purpose of modifying proposals. An agency can learn a great deal about the overall project or planning environment and about the viability of any alternative by objectively and actively listening to community spokespeople. Formal statements at large, structured meetings, as well as more casual remarks at small group discussions, can provide an agency with new perspectives and insights into the goals and values of the community. These efforts can be supplemented by comment forms; written, telephone, or on-line surveys; and other ways to assess public opinion. Properly assessed, such monitoring significantly adds to the development of a plan or project that more effectively meets the needs of the community it is designed to serve.

- ***Discuss*** as fully as possible a variety of project or plan issues as they relate to the community's perception of its needs, concerns, and objectives. Both large and small meetings can stimulate spontaneous dialogue that can result in an increased cooperative spirit as well as valuable input. A variety of small group techniques is available to meet specific objectives, as well as to ease the process of interaction for those who find larger sessions intimidating or unproductive. Specialized small-group techniques such as focus groups, role-playing sessions, or even meetings held via teleconferencing can meet special goals in a public involvement effort. Issue-oriented seminars or workshops, agency-sponsored debates, and walk-in open-house information sessions are particularly effective in this regard. Once again, the important ingredient is ***feedback:*** Whenever a discussion raises a new issue or a different approach, it is essential that the agency provide a workable framework within which to consider the input and relate its findings.

- ***Reach consensus*** on one or more issues raised in the course of the agency's studies. Although the public involvement process must very specifically reserve ultimate decision-making authority for the agency itself, many situations require agreement within the community as a prerequisite to continued work. Small problem-solving or workshop sessions, in which community representatives jointly develop an acceptable position, can provide the impetus and environment needed to revive flagging or aimless communication.

Each of these objectives assumes particular importance at a designated stage in the transportation process. As a plan or project evolves from general discussion towards a public hearing at which a specific location and/or design configuration will be selected, priorities shift—and the need for a flexible approach to meetings becomes imperative. A variety of formats, structures, and agendas must be carefully planned to accommodate the community's diverse and sometimes conflicting needs and to help the agency anticipate and deal with such situations as meetings at which:

- participants demand negotiation and decision-making rather than an exchange of information and ideas;
- vested interests are over-represented, but a cross-section of the plan or project area community is under-represented;
- a wide range of complex and divergent concerns and interests merit presentation and discussion;
- self-styled "project experts" attempt to dominate discussion;
- well-organized special interest groups tend to intimidate and frustrate the average citizen;
- participants introduce extraneous and irrelevant issues;
- participants insist on lengthy expressions of support or opposition without introducing any new or substantive information; or
- hostile and disruptive factions attempt to reduce a meeting to confrontation.

Although no foolproof or utopian solution to these problems exists, the likelihood of their occurrence can be minimized by thorough preparation, combined with a bit of common sense and an invaluable dose of experience. In addition, use of negotiation and mediation techniques and assistance from an outside facilitator can help make meetings more constructive.

MEETING PREPARATION

A successful meeting is the result of early, comprehensive, and thorough planning. Despite its appearance, an "effortless" meeting does not just "happen." Nor is it wholly the function of an experienced and effective moderator or conductor. In simple terms, a productive meeting is the culmination of hard work, involving a combination of creative decision-making and tedious routine tasks.

With this in mind, we present the following guidelines for meeting preparation. Based on information from a variety of State transportation agencies around the country, these guidelines represent a composite of workable techniques and activities. In reviewing the guidelines and the suggested chronological task sequence, it is important to remember that our intention is not to put forth an absolute mandate or advocate a specific program. As with all other aspects of a public involvement program, meeting preparation is a highly individualized function that must be specifically geared to the unique needs and resources of each agency and of each project or plan. The following recommendations should therefore be utilized, adapted, or ignored, as appropriate.

1. Clearly define and structure your public involvement program.

The first task in preparing for a meeting should actually be undertaken long before any specific public involvement activity is scheduled. Since a successful meeting cannot exist in isolation but must fit into an overall framework of public involvement, it is important to develop a comprehensive and long-range perspective. A public involvement program should be keyed to the goals of your transportation effort, whether it be State or metropolitan planning or project development, and focused on the particular public you want to involve. Once you have defined your project community and become familiar with the specifics of the proposed action and of the involved geographic area, it is time to determine the scope and objectives of your public involvement activities. Before finalizing a work program, it is important to take a close look at the overall time frame; available internal resources, including budget, people-power, and equipment; and department priorities and potentially conflicting demands within the given time period.

In determining the specific components and the overall configuration of your program, consider such factors as:

- developing and maintaining a project or plan mailing list;
- projecting the number, timing, format, and purpose of community meetings;

- scheduling workshops, forums, charrettes, retreats, site visits, briefings, and/or open house information sessions;
- utilizing new formats made possible by innovative technology, such as electronic town meetings, on-line information services, teleconferencing, and interactive displays and kiosks;
- establishing civic and/or technical advisory committees or collaborative task forces or appointing citizens to decision-making bodies;
- developing appropriate meeting/hearing procedures and agendas;
- coordinating the research and development of meeting/hearing presentations;
- preparing and distributing newsletters, press releases, brochures, newspaper inserts, and other public information materials;
- developing an overall program of media relations and community education/ information;
- determining the extent of formal and informal notification procedures;
- developing techniques for evaluating, incorporating, and following up on public input;
- selecting and preparing appropriate handouts, graphics, displays, computer presentations, and exhibits;
- appropriately using audio-visual aids;
- selecting meeting/hearing panels, conductors, facilitators, and moderators; and
- staffing and administering meetings and hearings.

One northeastern state begins to structure an individual program of public involvement activities as soon as any project is included in the agency's annual work schedule. That program is defined in a scope memorandum, which becomes the first major document in the project's public involvement file. In some cases, the scope simply involves a single meeting; in others, it provides for an interrelationship of formal and informal meetings, newsletters, questionnaires, technical and civic advisory groups, and, of course, public hearings. Even projects that require no public involvement activities are written up and placed on file for future reference and possible reevaluation. In all cases, the scope is the product of internal meetings, site inspections, and research into the historical and, in some cases, legal background of the subject project.

Although scopes defined at the inception of public involvement planning are inevitably modified and expanded upon as the project develops, they serve as a skeletal tool to guide the public involvement program through its early days and assist in establishing long-range schedules and work assignments.

Exhibits 1-1 and 1-2 show sample scope memoranda, each defining a project of distinctly different range and complexity.

2. Clearly define the goals and objectives of the meeting.

Prior to initiating any specific meeting preparation tasks, it is important that all involved personnel understand the ***purpose*** of the meeting and the ***anticipated accomplishments.*** Agreement on the session's goals and objectives is essential to the development of a realistic agenda and presentation, as well as to the determination of format, site, timing, and presenters. Some examples:

- An introductory information meeting designed to acquaint the general project community with the overall panorama of the proposed work is most appropriately conducted as a traditional presentation/question-and-answer/discussion session. Informal small group meetings or workshops are decidedly less effective techniques for accomplishing such a purpose.
- A meeting to discuss environmental impacts should not include an engineering presentation on the geometry of alternative alignments. Although engineers should be available to answer relevant questions, they should not take the initiative and thereby dilute the basic purpose of the meeting.
- A meeting held to discuss possible right-of-way and relocation implications should not be scheduled until specific, albeit tentative, areas of impact can be defined. A general right-of-way "policy and procedure" meeting, held early in the transportation planning process, serves no constructive purpose and tends to result in fear, confusion, and a distortion of fact.

Once you crystallize the meeting objectives, double-check to make sure that you have reasonably defined and limited your goals. If you set out to accomplish too much, you are likely to end up with a long, aimless meeting that will discourage agency and community participants and probably fail to achieve any tangible results. One Midwestern state has developed four meeting structures it uses as a guideline on all major projects:

Meeting 1—to introduce the project, "let the public know what the Department of Transportation is doing, and let DOT know what the public thinks."

Meeting 2—to show aerial photographs depicting alternatives; get public comments and suggestions regarding additional alternatives or particular, as-yet-unaddressed, needs; and develop a preliminary evaluation of general public reaction.

Meeting 3—to display a limited number of alternatives with reasonable design detail, including general geometries and general right-of-way. Once again, public reaction and recommendations are sought.

Exhibit 1-1: SIMPLE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCOPE

Community Involvement Scope—
Route 18, Sections 2C and 1F June 9, 19__

Following our evaluation of the Route 18, Sections 2C and 1F, project, we have determined that the public involvement program will consist of the following:

1. *News releases* — The agency will prepare all news releases for the project.
2. *Newsletters* — There will be no newsletters for this project.
3. *Community contact point* — The agency's Office of Public Involvement will be the contact point for all local inquiries and recommendations.
4. *Mailing list* — The Office of Public Involvement will develop a mailing list, which will include all potentially affected residents and property owners; all elected and appointed officials from the Federal level through the local level; and all transportation, environmental, and civic groups in the project area.
5. *Community meetings* — Two (2) public meetings will be held prior to a public hearing: one introductory meeting to discuss the scope and objectives of the project, and one alignment/impact meeting to explain the specific effects of the proposed action. An in-house briefing will be held prior to each meeting as well as before the combined corridor/design public hearing.

All public involvement tasks will be handled in-house. No consultant will be involved.

Exhibit 1-2: COMPLEX PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCOPE

NYSDOT Southtowns Connector/Buffalo Outer Harbor MIS
Outline of Public Involvement Program

I. Introduction
   A. Requirements under ISTEA
   B. Overview of program

II. Public involvement market segmentation
   A. Key agencies
   B. Key stakeholders/groups
   C. General public

III. Public involvement techniques
   A. Committees
      1. Community liaison committee (CLC)
      2. Technical working group
      3. Community leaders' forum (CLF)
   B. Meeting/interviews/presentations
      1. Leader interviews
      2. Presentations
      3. Open houses
   C. Publications
      1. Newsletters published at key analysis milestones
      2. Fact sheets
      3. Press information kits
   D. Public information office activities
      Public information office located at NYSDOT's project office
      1. Visitor sign-in book
      2. Displays of current work
      3. Library of relevant documents
      4. A/V equipment
      5. Meeting space
      6. 800 phone number
      7. Database/issues log
   E. Media
      1. Press releases and paid ads for open houses
      2. Press briefings at public information office prior to open houses
      3. Project video(s) made available to local television stations and cable television
      4. Press kits

Meeting 4—to familiarize the public with the material that will be presented at the public hearing, in order to encourage people to "make informed comments." This meeting, held two to six weeks prior to the hearing, is an all-day informal session at which participants are dealt with on a one-to-one basis.

3. Define the community.

Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult, problematic, and least "scientific" meeting preparation tasks is defining the community. Clearly, there are no hard-and-fast rules. Nor are there any universal guidelines. Familiarity with project or planning issues and their likely impacts; general sensibility, sophistication, and ability to understand English; and evaluation of the agency's resources and priorities must be considered on a case-by-case basis. An additional caveat:

Different criteria must be established and applied for community definition in urban, suburban, and rural areas. In addition, a truly inclusive public involvement program addresses the needs of portions of the population that may be traditionally underserved by transportation, such as ethnic and non-English-speaking, minority, and low-income groups, and people with disabilities.

In all cases, the underlying decision is whether to define the community broadly or narrowly. Broad definition becomes very complex and ambiguous. Since it can be expanded to include all segments of the user population—i.e., all motorists and others using the transportation network in question—it is generally considered unwieldy. However, if a proposed project involves potential impacts to park land or other cultural/recreational facilities, it is imperative to include the user population in your public involvement program.

REMEMBER YOUR CORE COMMUNITY!

Regardless of whether you adopt a broad or a narrow definition of community for a given project or planning effort, a "core community" should always be invited to participate—including elected and appointed officials; local civic and spiritual leaders; and prominent transportation and environmental organizations in the area.

Because community definition is a prerequisite to determining meeting format and notification procedures, as well as such meeting logistics as time, place, and choice of presenters, your decision to include or to exclude various segments of the population must be made at the project or plan scope development stage. Among the questions to consider are the following:

- How will the "general area of impact" be defined for a project in the feasibility or preliminary planning stage?
- Will the definition of community be limited to people in the *primary* area of impact (possible relocatees; individuals within an area of potentially unaccep-

table noise or air quality; people directly adjacent to the proposed alignment)? Or will it also include people in the *secondary* area of impact (those possibly affected by a loss of community cohesion, a change in the physical, cultural, or environmental character of the community, etc.)?

- How will "adjacent area" be defined? Will it include only the first row of houses or businesses abutting the proposed facility, or will it include a broader band? If the latter, how broad—200′, 500′, more?
- Will the definition of community be limited to residential, commercial, and industrial *property owners* in the area, or will tenants be included as well?

All these factors significantly affect the development of a mailing list and the preparation and distribution of notification documents. For a complete discussion of mailing lists, please see **Chapter 3, Notification Techniques.**

4. Determine the meeting format.

Selecting an appropriate format is a key factor in determining the success or failure of a meeting. The choice of format is basically a simple one and should depend both on the goals and objectives of the meeting and on the nature and needs of the community to be involved. In almost all instances, a public involvement program should use a combination of formats: large, structured information meetings; small discussion groups, workshops, and/or advisory panels; and informal walk-in information sessions such as open houses, in addition to the public hearing. Offering a variety of formats or conducting some meetings in non-traditional places increases the chances of attracting participants and demonstrates an agency's intent to make it easy for the community to take part. In one Midwestern State, for instance, more than 7,500 people attended DOT meetings on its long-range plan: 16 forums, 9 informational meetings, 7 topical review meetings, 1 meeting with 40 statewide organizations, peer review meetings on subjects such as freight, 10 statewide groups, and 15 town meetings.

"FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION!"

The format of a meeting arises out of its goals and objectives and the nature of the target community, not vice versa, and is effective only to the extent that it addresses them. While the basis of a sound public involvement program lies in traditional, proven meeting techniques, innovative formats such as role playing, open space technology, and Samoan circles can be effective tools in situations that warrant a maximum degree of attention and small-group interaction. Be sure your fiscal, time, and personnel resources can accommodate the added component.

Involving the community in planning a meeting enhances its chances for success. You can ask community groups what issues need to be raised and what meeting dates and places are likely to draw people to participate. This consultation helps determine the appropriate format(s), depending on the community's traditions or preferences. This is particularly crucial when the community includes minorities and ethnic groups whose cultural attitudes strongly influence how they see and participate in a public process.

Large Meetings

The traditional large meeting format is an effective means of presenting information and gathering public input. It represents a workable technique for disseminating substantial amounts of data to a large and diverse audience. For this reason, it is commonly used at meetings designed to introduce a project, present alternative alignments/designs, or discuss potential social, environmental, and economic impacts. In most instances, a large meeting consists of an agency presentation, followed by a discussion/question-and-answer period.

Large meetings also serve another important function. By bringing together a variety of interest groups that might otherwise not be aware of each other's needs and concerns, they become a catalyst for action. If held early in the transportation planning or project development process, before individuals and organizations have crystallized their positions and become resistant to change, meetings with a cross-section of the population can give impetus to the need for early identification and resolution of problem issues.

But large meetings also have many disadvantages. Although they are not encumbered by the legal requirements concerning notification, conduct, recording, and transcript preparation that exist for public hearings, they retain many aspects of formality. The traditional arrangement of a panel of agency officials facing the public is often intimidating and a barrier to a free exchange of ideas. The large room required for the meeting necessitates the use of microphones. The physical—and psychological—separation of agency from community tends to polarize positions, discourage less articulate or inexperienced speakers from participating, and reinforce the "us-versus-them" stance that adds fuel to the fire of vocal minorities.

It is also important to remember that varied styles of communication are inherent in different communities, particularly many ethnic and minority cultures. In some cultures, for example, roundtable discussion with the entire community precedes decisions by its leaders. In others, the wisdom of elders is particularly valued and sought in community decision-making. It is especially important to help some ethnic groups understand that speaking up will not be interpreted as "making trouble." Agency staff members who lead public involvement efforts need to understand the traditions and behavioral patterns of constituent groups so they can hear what the community is telling them and choose appropriate communication styles and meeting arrangements.

Two basic, large-meeting, room arrangements are shown in **Exhibit 1-3**.

In choosing a large meeting format, it is important to balance the pros and cons. Very often, the scope and objectives of the meeting preclude any other format; at other times, budgetary, personnel, and time constraints mitigate against holding a series of smaller sessions. A number of agencies have, therefore, concentrated on

Exhibit 1-3: TRADITIONAL LARGE-GROUP ARRANGEMENTS

DIAGRAM 1

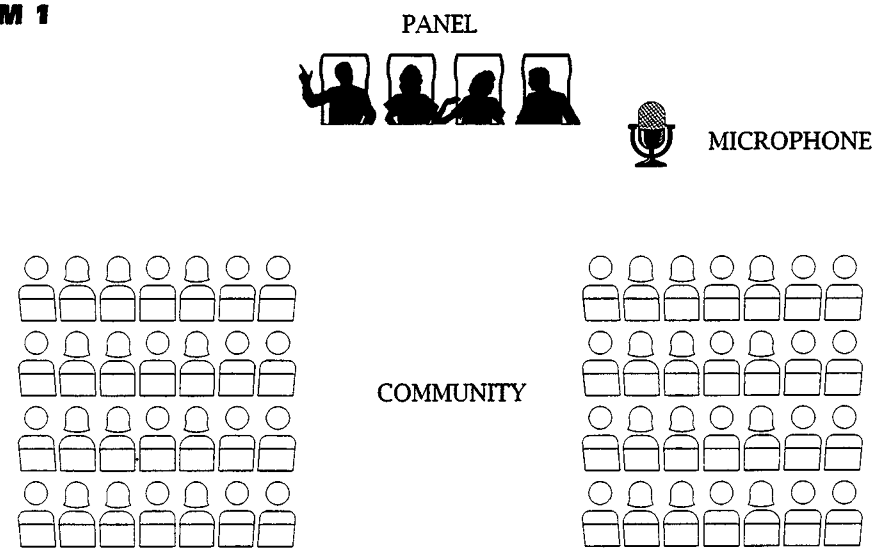
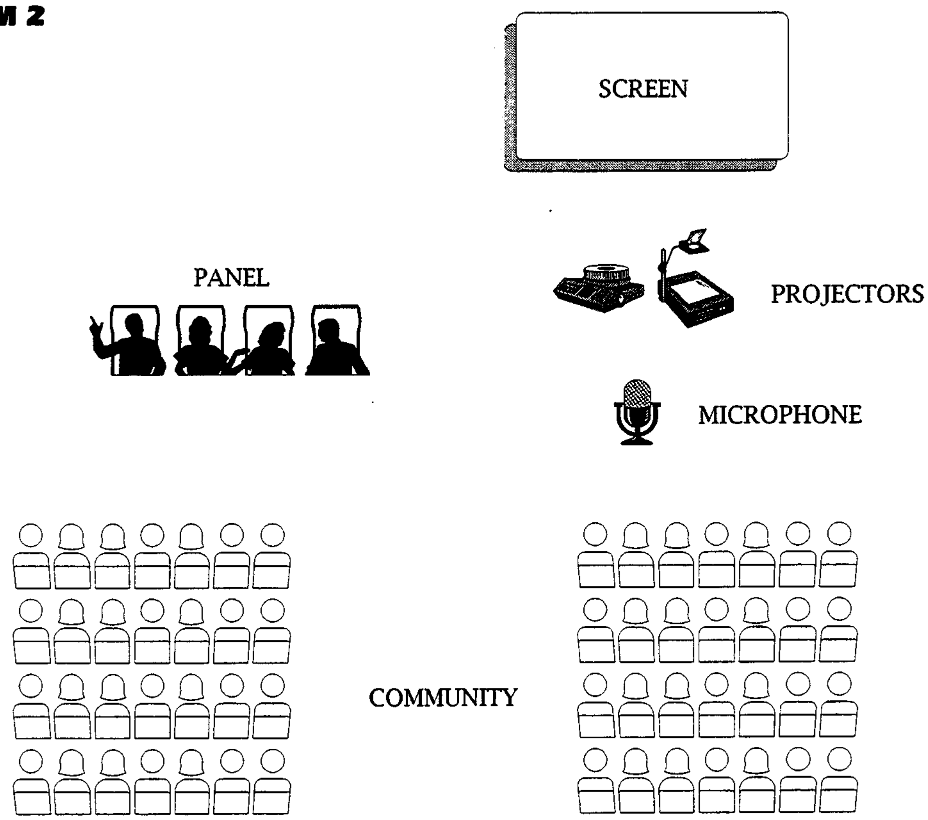


DIAGRAM 2



developing techniques for creating a more informal room environment within the overall context of the large meeting format. Although some adaptations are not appropriate for very large meetings (over 100 people), several have been successfully used with moderate-sized groups.

- ***Half-moon or circular arrangement.*** This arrangement breaks down a formal atmosphere physically—by bringing audience and presenters closer together—and psychologically—by deviating from the traditional hierarchical "classroom" arrangement. As shown in **Exhibit 1-4,** the half-moon allows the placement of "scattered" microphones and thus encourages the participation of people reluctant to speak from a focal position at the front of the room. In general, a half-moon or circular arrangement increases the possibility of active participation by a maximum number of people. The major drawback is finding a room that comfortably accommodates the flexible seating arrangement.

ELIMINATE YOUR HEAD PANEL!

Total integration of agency and community participants at a large meeting is an ideal, but not always attainable, goal. One agency has found that a moderate-size meeting can be successfully conducted by structuring the seating in a horseshoe arrangement, with the edges very close together at the front of the room. Agency representatives sit at the ends of the horseshoe, thereby eliminating the need for a formal panel. Although the application of this format is suitable only to very special situations, it is an effective means of creating a workable informal environment.

- ***"Conversational" arrangement.*** This format combines elements of large and small meeting structures by designating specific areas for official presentation and for discussion purposes. As shown in **Exhibit 1-5,** the small-table arrangement maximizes interaction by encouraging participants to share information and ideas throughout the course of the meeting. At the same time, the carefully structured room layout provides all attendees with clear visibility of speaker and graphics. With the elimination of the official panel, agency staffers are given the opportunity to "free-float" throughout the room and informally converse with community participants. The major drawback of this format is that an effective relationship between the discussion and the presentation area can only be maintained if the. number of participants is limited to a maximum of 70.

- ***"Multi-use" arrangement.*** This format introduces informality by physically dividing the meeting room into different sections for different purposes. It is most frequently used for meetings at which complex data must be presented and discussed.

Exhibit 1-4: HALF-MOON OR CIRCULAR ARRANGEMENT

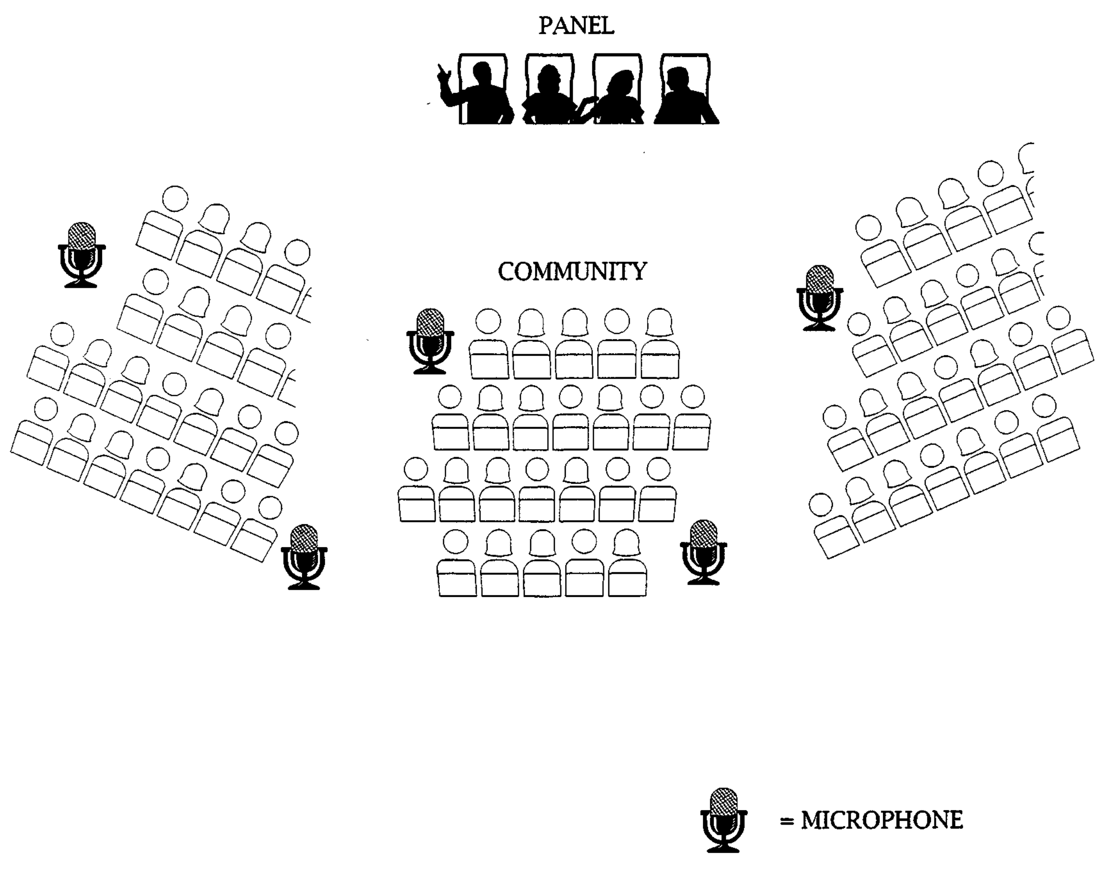
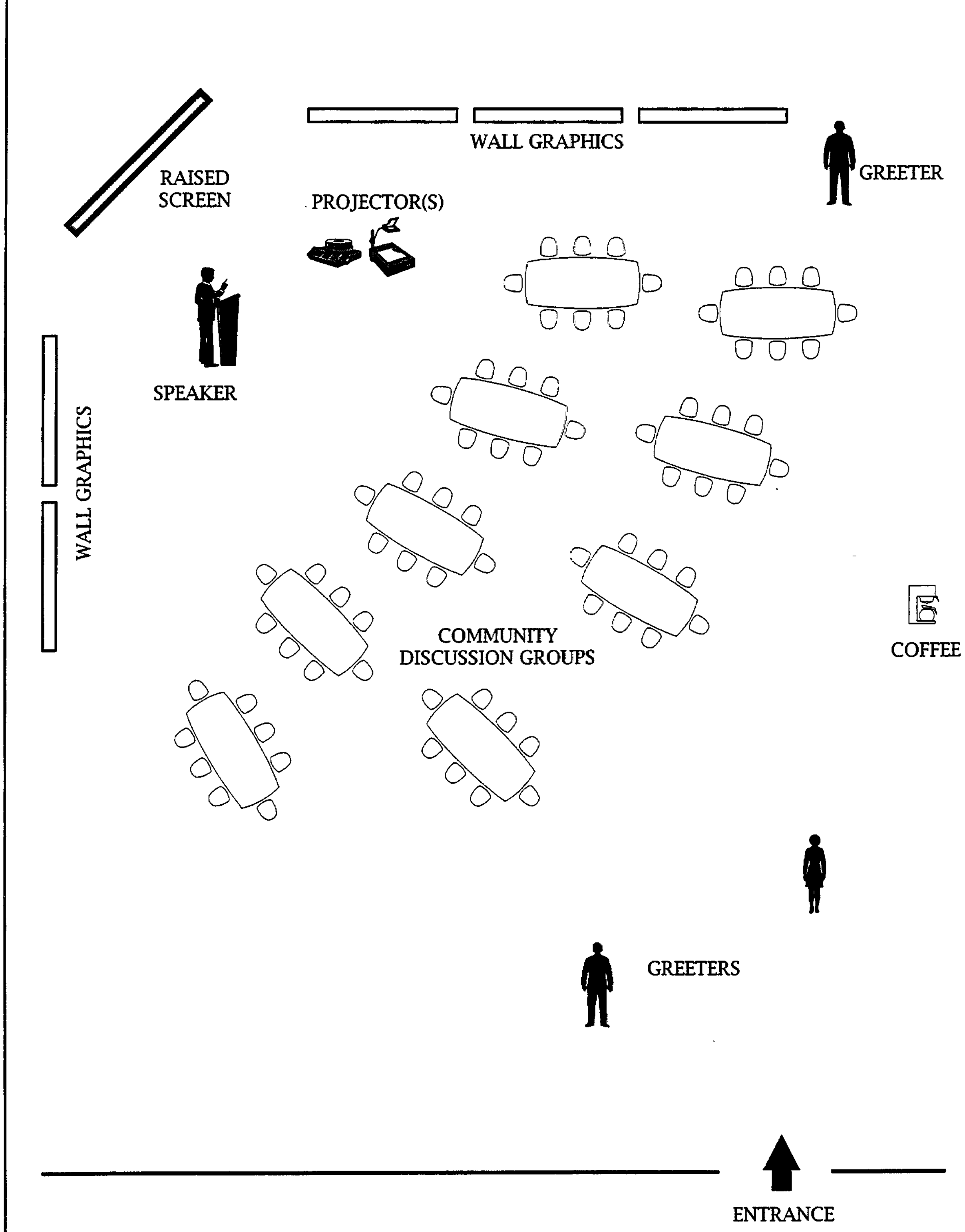


Exhibit 1-5: CONVERSATIONAL ARRANGEMENT



As shown in **Exhibit 1-6**, the multi-use format separates the formal presentation area from activity areas that permit participants to view displays, complete forms, gather general information and handouts, and participate in roundtable discussions on specific topics. Major advantages of this format include establishment of an environment conducive to open communication and co-ordination of a number of related activities into a cohesive whole.

On the other hand, the "multi-use" arrangement has some major disadvantages. The most obvious is the need for an extremely large facility with total flexibility in room arrangement and organization.

An even more significant disadvantage is a noisy, unmanageable environment in which conflicting activities often compete for attention. Put in simple terms, this arrangement sets out to do too much. Even under optimum conditions, a large variety of simultaneously-occurring disparate events cannot co-exist in a single room. Several agencies deal with this problem by separating the activities into individual, preferably adjacent, rooms that are coordinated by a central information area. Each activity can be conducted with the respect, quiet, and integrity it deserves, and each attendee has the opportunity to participate without distraction.

Small Meetings

A small meeting is the most effective way to promote informality, encourage an uninhibited exchange of ideas, and thoroughly discuss and evaluate an issue. For this reason, one of the many possible small-meeting formats is selected whenever a meeting needs to maximize information-sharing among community members. The agency's role at a small meeting is basically to define the topic or problem, present all necessary data, and then listen to and digest the participants' input so that it can be thoroughly and objectively evaluated by department staff at a later date.

In recent years, many small-meeting formats have been developed and successfully applied by State departments of transportation throughout the country. All utilize a circle, square, or oval seating arrangement for groups with a maximum of 20 participants and a "free-floating" small-table setup for larger meetings. A number of agencies use one of the formats shown in **Exhibit 1-7** when conducting a task force, advisory panel, or consensus development meeting:

In each case, the room arrangement is designed to meet the following objectives:

1. to enable all participants to see each other;

2. to integrate agency representatives with the public by seating them at community work tables; and

3. to eliminate a central focus and thereby create a "peer" environment.

Other advantages include the elimination of microphones and the absence of a designated presentation area—two factors that greatly contribute to a meeting's ease and informality.

Exhibit 1-6: MULTI-USE ARRANGEMENT

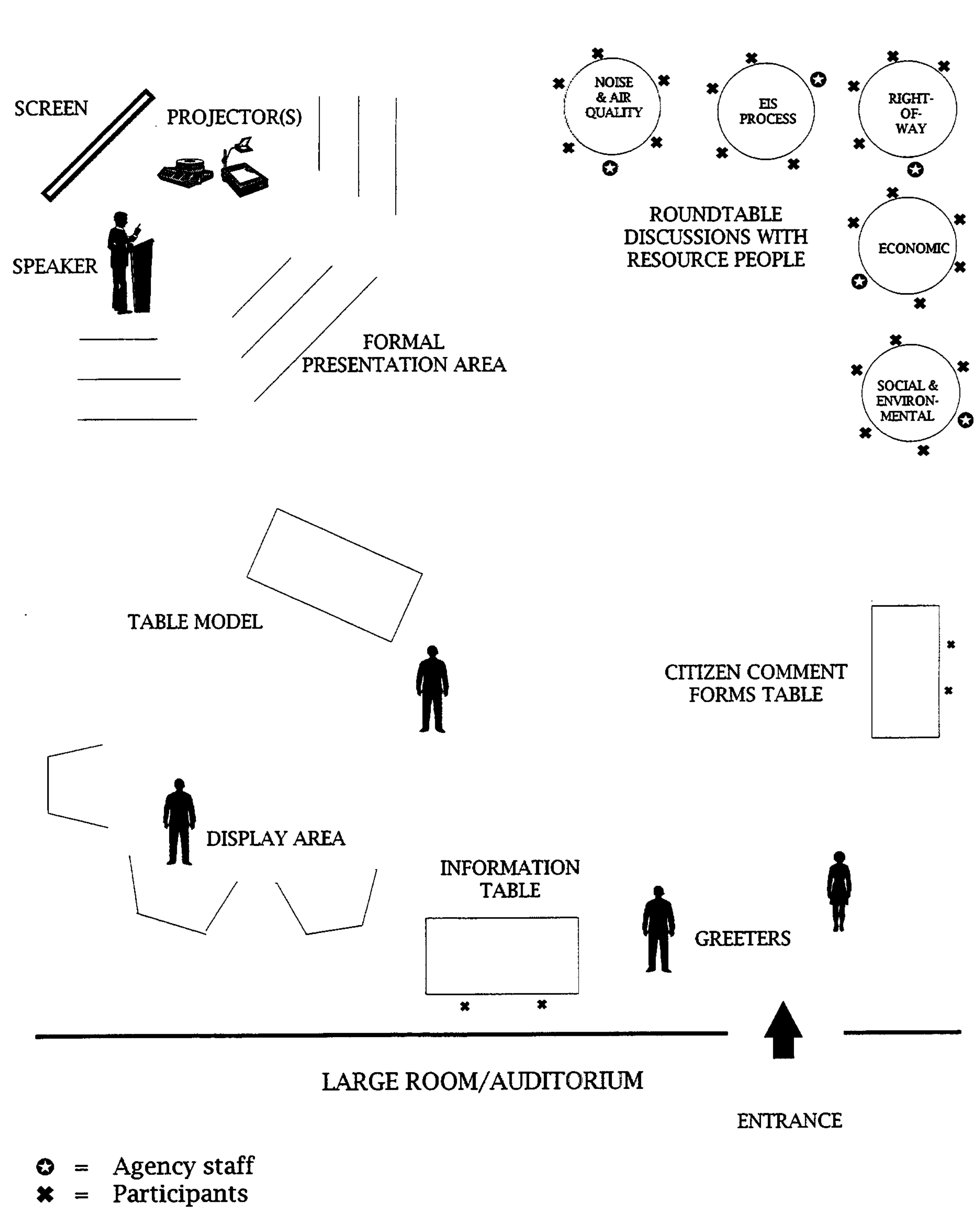
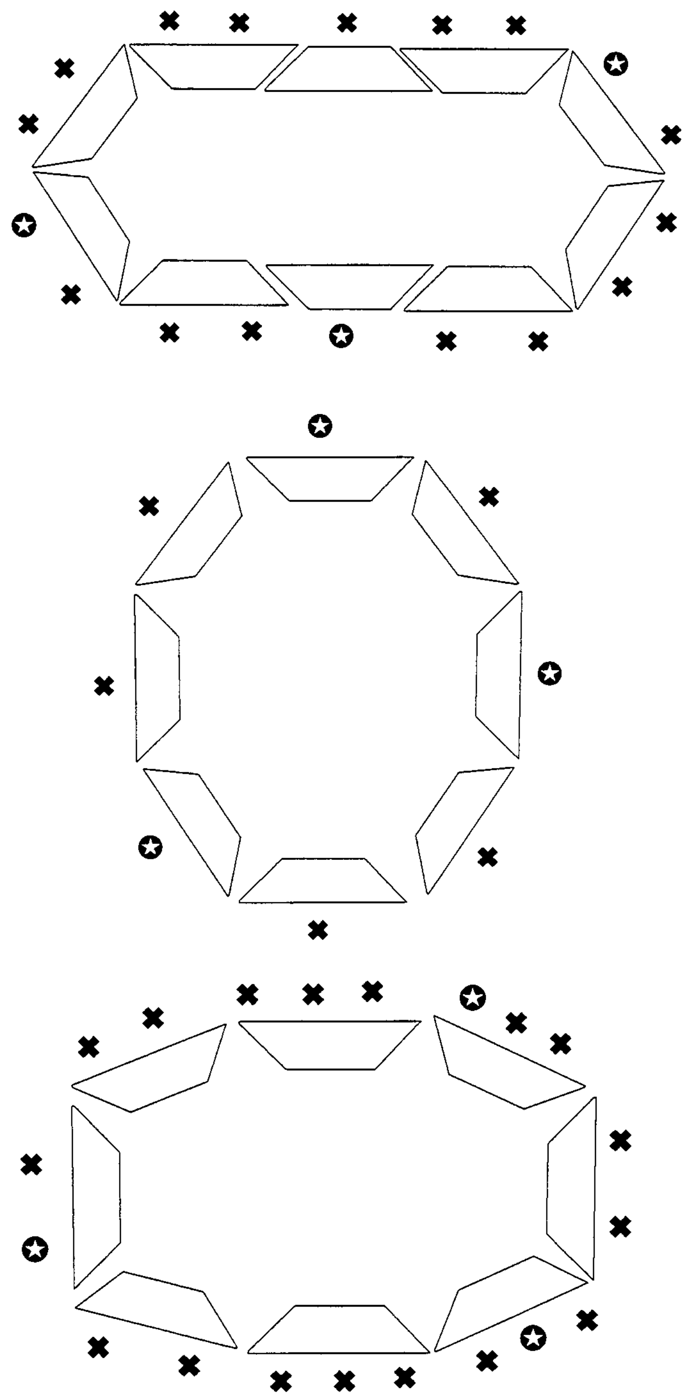


Exhibit 1-7: THREE SMALL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS



✪ = Agency representative
✖ = Community representative

The most popular and effective small-group meeting arrangements are workshops, advisory panels, and coffee klatsches.

- *Workshops.* This format creates an environment highly conducive to open communication and interactive exchange and evaluation of perspectives. Workshops are generally designed as informal sessions that deal with a specific task or problem and aim at reaching a definite goal or objective. Some workshops go by the name "charrette," but they have the same overall format and purpose.

  Small workshops, with attendance limited to 15–25 representatives of a variety of interest groups, can focus on tasks as broad as formulating a vision of the region or alternatives to an alignment under consideration or as narrow as recommending a site for relocation of a playground facility that may be affected by the transportation project. These workshops often aim at developing consensus among a number of diverse and, at times, opposing community organizations. They can be conducted in any comfortable conference room or facility with a table large enough to permit all participants to see each other.

  Larger workshops, with as many as 100 people, can also be used to brainstorm, conduct visioning exercises, formulate alternatives, and discuss a range of specific project-related issues. They can also be part of an open-house style of public meeting. These workshops are generally held in a large room set up in a random arrangement of tables. Each table of 5-10 participants initially functions as a separate entity: The group discusses the topic under consideration and then selects a spokesperson to present its analysis, interpretation, and consensus to the entire gathering. Because of the large number of participants, these workshops require a greater degree of organization relating to agenda and to time limits for discussion and presentation of material. To ensure informality, seating arrangements must be carefully planned and flexible enough to permit each table to interact with participants in all other groups. One possible workshop format is shown in **Exhibit 1-8.** Alternatively, the conversational arrangement shown in **Exhibit 1-5** can be used.

  In his guidebook for the *Conducting a Public Meeting* workshop series, John F. Willey, formerly with the Massachusetts Highway Department, lists a number of advantages of the workshop format. The following should be kept in mind when planning a workshop session:

  1. The participants at the table select a table leader, thereby establishing a peer relationship.

  2. No one person can dominate the meeting.

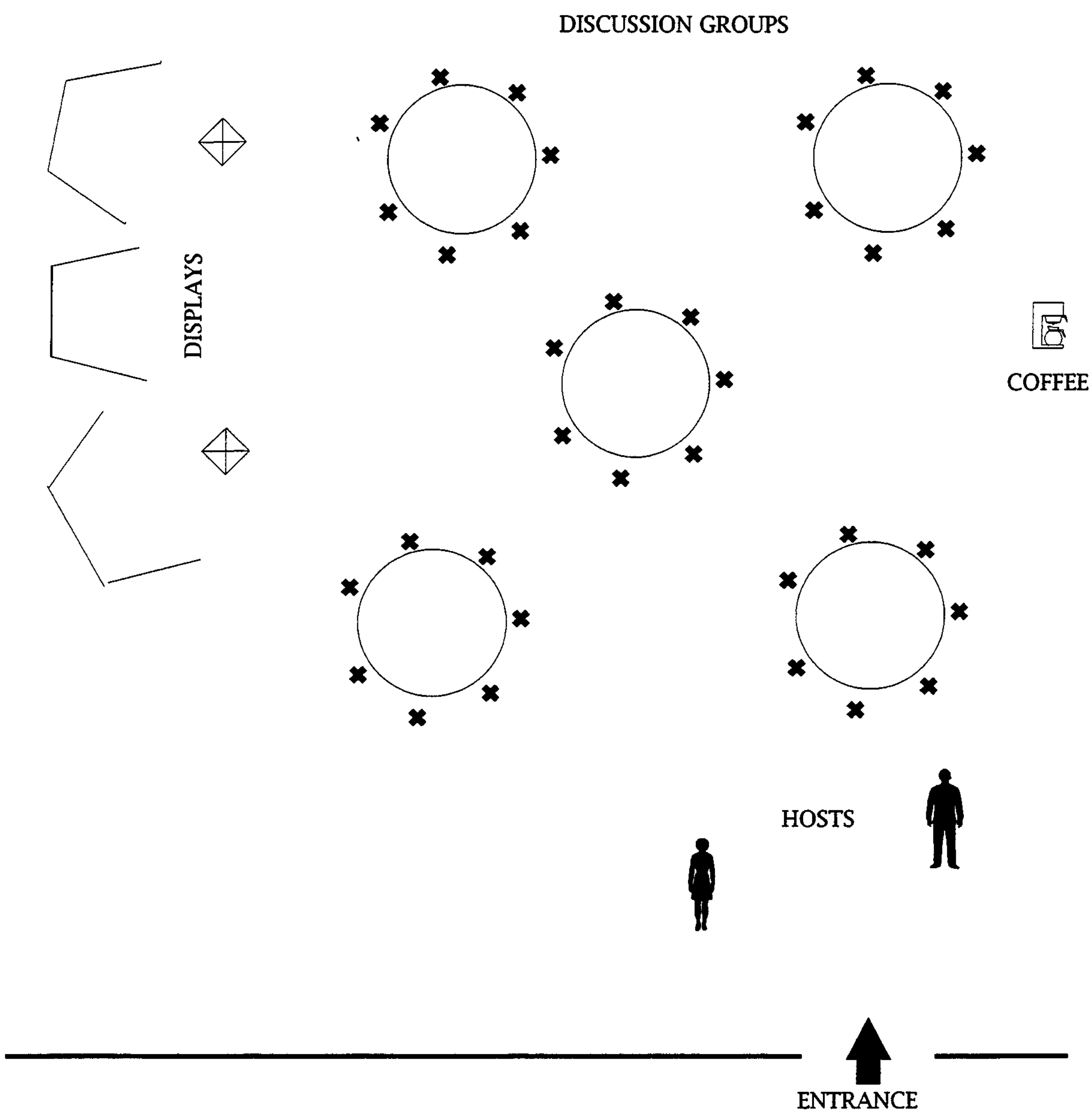
  3. The work space encourages productivity.

  4. People can and do speak freely without fear of facing a large audience.

  5. People can and do speak freely without fear of microphones.

  6. Participants can provide information about their goals, values, and opinions.

Exhibit 1-8: SAMPLE WORKSHOP ARRANGEMENT



7. An agency can present a list of questions it would like answered by participants.

- *Advisory Panels.* The advisory panel is a very specialized small-group format that is highly interactive and informal. It generally consists of a group selected jointly by the agency and the community to serve as a consulting body. Membership may include a combination of technical advisors and members of the public or be limited to one or the other. Advisory panels are ideally suited to an informal roundtable arrangement. Since membership usually does not exceed 15-20 people, microphones and other trappings of formality are not needed.

  The **agenda** section of this chapter (see **page 44**) discusses in detail the comprehensive planning and organization needed to conduct an effective advisory panel session. But one word of caution is appropriate at this point: Make sure you clearly define and communicate the purpose of your panel prior to scheduling your first meeting. Chaos and resentment inevitably result unless you specify whether your panel is being convened to:

  1. serve as a general coordinating body and liaison between the agency and interested segments of the public;

  2. function as a source of solid input from either a technical or a community perspective; or

  3. provide a screening mechanism prior to the agency's presentation of ideas to the community-at-large.

- *Coffee Klatsch.* This format is perhaps the ultimate technique for maximizing informality and open interaction. Generally held in a private home, for a group of no more than 15-20 people, a coffee klatsch permits discussion of project issues over coffee and cake. As might be expected, seating is random, with sofas, chairs, window sills, and even the floor considered appropriate seating choices. Although presentation of data at a coffee klatsch should be brief and to-the-point, flip charts and handouts can effectively blend into the setting.

  A coffee klatsch is a particularly good format to use during the early stages of a projector planning process. It provides a perfect environment for calmly identifying and discussing project issues and problems and developing a good rapport between agency and public.

  In deciding whether to use a coffee klatsch format, an agency's primary consideration should be whether existing resources are adequate to permit a large number of small meetings throughout the project community.

UNIVERSAL TIPS

As you begin to develop the format for a major public meeting, remember to provide the following:

- *greeters near the entrance door;*
- *an information table with handouts, maps, agendas, comment forms, and knowledgeable personnel;*
- *adequate resource specialists; and*
- *a large display area.*

Walk-in Information Sessions

Walk-in information sessions such as open houses and transportation fairs are an increasingly popular format for dealing with the public on a one-to-one basis. They can be conducted in any large facility conducive to a flexible arrangement of tables, exhibits, and personnel. School cafeterias, gymnasiums, and all-purpose rooms provide a virtually tailor-made environment. Since most sessions are conducted during both daytime and evening hours, all segments of the project population are given an opportunity to attend.

Participants at a walk-in session are encouraged to read, ask questions, review exhibits, form discussion groups, or interact with each other and with agency representatives in a totally informal manner. Since there are no agendas, presentations, or other structured activities, people come and go at will.

At one time, walk-in sessions were used primarily as a pre-hearing technique. Today, agencies throughout the country find they are appropriate at nearly any stage in a project or plan development cycle—particularly at benchmarks designating completion of specific engineering, environmental, or right-of-way activities.

"WALK-THROUGH" EXHIBITS

That is what one department of transportation calls its information sessions. They consist of a variety of separate rooms, each focusing on a relevant area of the project. Participants can pinpoint a particular area of interest or visit a series of rooms concerned with air quality, noise, right-of-way, and socioeconomic effects in order to gain a more comprehensive perspective.

5. Finalize the meeting date and time.

To assure a good meeting turnout, it is important to select a date and time suitable to the work patterns and lifestyles of the community. Since no two communities are exactly alike, a bit of informal research, along with conversations with local spokespeople, are your best guide.

Initially, however, selection of a meeting date and time will be governed by a number of internal agency factors. Principal among them are the following:

1. time required to prepare exhibits, presentations, slides, and other audio-visual aids;

2. availability of technical data, reports, and other materials needed for the meeting;

3. the agency's current workload and overall meeting schedule; and

4. legal and fiscal deadlines, including time limitations on availability of funds and final dates for filing permit applications.

In reviewing these internal criteria, it is essential to establish a reasonable schedule and time frame within which to accomplish all preparatory tasks. Try to avoid the aggravation of boxing yourself in with a "crisis" schedule that provides little flexibility and no margin for error. **Chapter 3: Notification Techniques; Chapter 4: Handouts;** and **Chapter 5: Graphics, Visual Aids, and Electronic Communications** contain guidelines for timing meeting preparation activities.

Once you have narrowed down a list of possibilities, zero in on a particular date. As a general rule, meetings should not be scheduled on weekends or on national, religious, or ethnic holidays. If your project community includes a substantial Jewish population, it is also advisable to avoid scheduling meetings on Friday night.

And finally, it is always a good idea to familiarize yourself with the social, cultural, and religious events of the project community and to stay away from evenings on which civic and church activities are regularly scheduled.

Determining a starting time for a meeting is similarly dependent on the habits and lifestyles of the community in question. Selecting convenient meeting times helps increase attendance. Weekdays at 7:30 or 8:00 P.M. are generally considered the best times to start a meeting, since all segments of the public are more likely to be able to attend. But States throughout the country report the following exceptions:

1. In communities with a large *elderly* population, afternoon meetings usually produce the best turnout.

2. In *high crime* areas, daytime or early evening meetings are preferable to a 7:30 or 8:00 P.M. start.

3. In communities with a high percentage of *self-employed* people—particularly in rural areas—afternoon meetings are preferred.

4. In bedroom communities with a significant commuter population, evening meetings should not be scheduled prior to 8:00 P.M.

KEEP AGENCY STAFF IN MIND

In selecting a meeting time, be considerate of agency staffers who have to travel a considerable distance from the project community to their homes. In trying to accommodate community members, don't short-change your own people. A case in point: A small community in an eastern state repeatedly requested a 9:00 P.M. starting time for its meetings. The State transportation agency refused, citing a four-hour round-trip travel time for its employees.

6. Select a site.

Determining where to hold a meeting is an essential preliminary decision that significantly affects attendance, degree of participation, and initial community reaction to the agency and/or the transportation effort under discussion. In this regard, both the location of the meeting facility and the characteristics of the room itself assume importance and must be evaluated in terms of a number of criteria. Principal among them are the following:

Accessibility and Availability

Whenever possible, select a facility that is well-known and centrally located within reasonable proximity to the project or plan under discussion. Once you have targeted the interested and affected communities, focus on sites that are close and accessible via major transportation arteries. Include both typical sites (school halls, etc.) and non-traditional locations (e.g., a recreation facility) in your list of possible meeting sites. In familiarizing yourself with the travel habits of your constituency, remember that distance is relative. In urban areas, where walking and public transportation are the most common travel modes, it is best to limit site selection to a one-mile radius; conversely, in rural areas, where long-distance automobile travel is a way of life, many people drive 20 miles or more without complaining.

As you focus on specific facilities, consider these other points:

1. If people are *walking* to the site either from their homes or from a mass transit stop, it is important to choose an area that is safe and well-lit.

2. If people are *driving* to the facility, free and ample nearby parking is essential.

3. If the meeting site is unfamiliar, new, difficult to reach, or difficult to identify in the dark, include a *map* and/or *directions* as part of your notification document. This can be done simply and effectively by adding the meeting site to the overall project map. For example, **Exhibit 1-9,** a public meeting notice prepared by a western state, uses a black square to clearly identify the meeting site (Brighton High School) and to relate it to the proposed project. Other States have used asterisks or arrows to accomplish the same purpose.

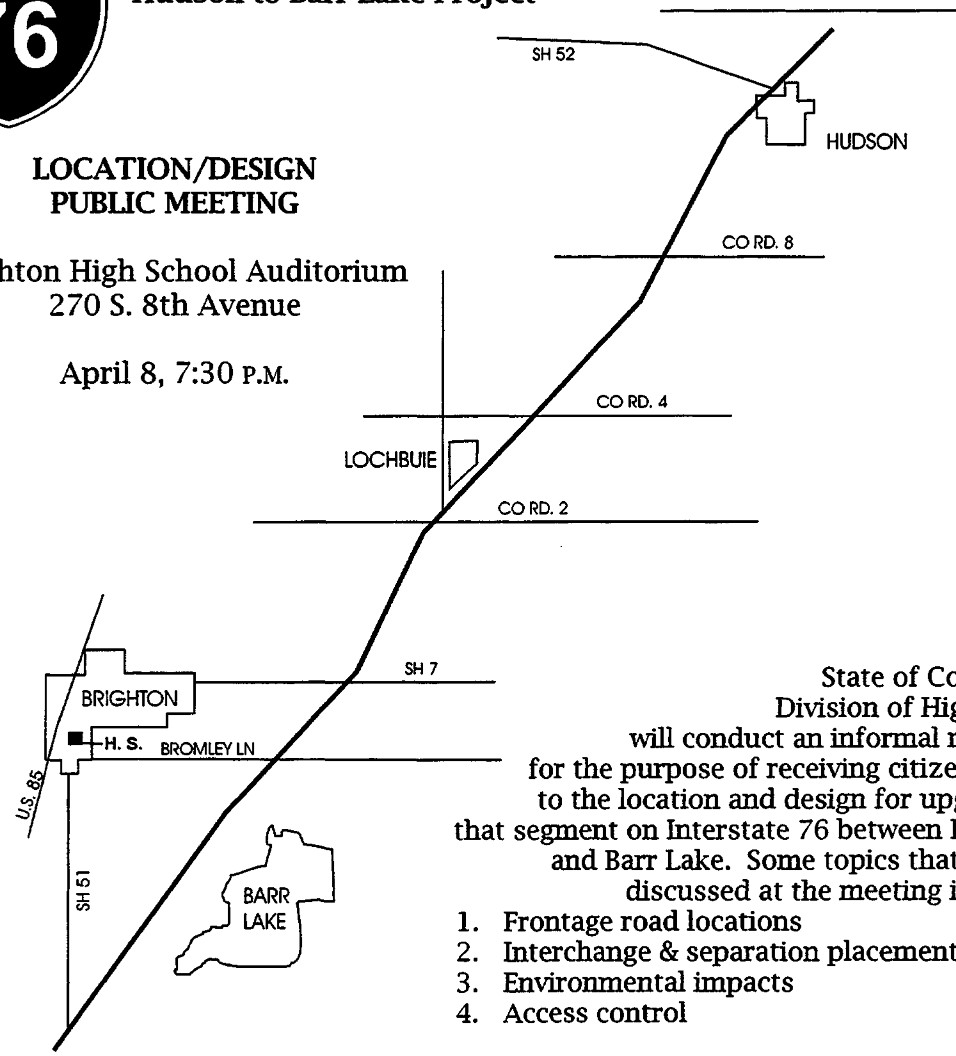
Exhibit 1-9: SAMPLE MEETING NOTICE WITH SITE MAP

Hudson to Barr Lake Project

LOCATION/DESIGN
PUBLIC MEETING

Brighton High School Auditorium
270 S. 8th Avenue

April 8, 7:30 P.M.



State of Colorado, Division of Highways, will conduct an informal meeting for the purpose of receiving citizen input to the location and design for upgrading that segment on Interstate 76 between Hudson and Barr Lake. Some topics that will be discussed at the meeting include:

1. Frontage road locations
2. Interchange & separation placement
3. Environmental impacts
4. Access control

Interested individuals or groups are invited to attend. Written comments may be sent to:

Colorado Division of Highways
P.O. Box 850
Greeley, Colorado 80631

4. Make sure your meeting site is accessible to people with disabilities and meets the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

AIM FOR NEUTRAL TERRITORY

To create as objective a meeting atmosphere as possible, avoid facilities that might have negative and/or emotional connotations. Courthouses and churches are generally considered poor choices and should be avoided whenever possible. Conversely, schools, community centers, or civic auditoriums are almost always acceptable.

Another important aspect of site selection is the general availability of the facility—not only *during* the hours of the scheduled meeting but also for several hours *beforehand* and for a reasonable period of time *after* the meeting adjourns. To properly set up displays, check out equipment, and attend to any necessary housekeeping, focus on sites that are available by mid-afternoon for an evening meeting and by mid-morning for an afternoon meeting.

One State transportation agency has found that the following rule-of-thumb helps avoid last-minute crises: When planning a 7:30 P.M. meeting, arrange for equipment and meeting coordinators to arrive at the facility by 3:00 P.M. This gives ample time to arrange the room, test audio-visual and recording equipment, and make necessary adjustments well in advance of the public's arrival. Routine matters such as replacing a light bulb, finding an adapter, locating an extension cord, etc., can be handled comfortably and without the last-minute panic that can disrupt even the best-planned schedule. Additional advantages: Necessary purchases can be made before local stores close, and any items left behind at the office can be transported by other agency staff members planning to attend the meeting.

It is equally important to know that the facility will be available for a period of time after the close of your meeting. Although proper planning should include a specific closing hour, it is important to build in enough flexibility to enable you to extend the session if you are at a crucial point or close to reaching consensus. A building custodian's announcement that the facility will be locked up in 10 minutes can completely shatter any rapport developed during the meeting and totally destroy the agency's credibility. If you are dealing with a controversial project, it is particularly important to allow "cushion time" at the end of the meeting to speak to people with particular concerns or just to tie up loose ends and develop and announce your follow-up strategy.

One additional item relating to facility availability should be mentioned at this point. If possible, select a site that can usually be reserved on short notice. A major unexpected event, such as severe weather conditions, can, at times, necessitate cancellation and rescheduling of a meeting. It is time- and cost-effective to go back to the same facility, thereby eliminating the need to duplicate efforts involved in site inspection, administrative tasks, and activities related to room arrangement, equipment, acoustics, and other logistics.

Comfort and Safety

An important influence on the degree of public participation at a meeting is the physical comfort of participants. One southern department of transportation cites "inappropriate settings" as a major criticism of its meetings and hearings, with warm, crowded rooms and poor acoustics heading the list of complaints.

Other agencies agree that hostility at a meeting is often unrelated to the project itself but closely related to the physical aspects of the room. In almost all instances, an uncomfortable room situation can be avoided through proper planning and adequate foresight.

Although the specifics of room arrangement are, of course, dependent on meeting format (see **page 12**), the following characteristics are universally applicable and should be considered in all instances:

1. ***Adequate Seating.*** Although it is impossible to determine exactly how many people will attend a given meeting, an approximation is usually possible. In estimating attendance, consider such factors as these:

    - distance covered by the project;

    - range of possible effects, particularly with regard to relocation, environmental impacts, historic sites, and institutions or community facilities;

    - degree of local interest/publicity to date;

    - size of present mailing list. When in doubt, overestimate by approximately 20 percent and arrange for the largest appropriate facility that will accommodate your needs without dwarfing your audience. Remember that although an overflow crowd creates tension and hostility, empty seats merely give people an opportunity to spread out.

2. ***Comfortable Seating.*** An ideal meeting room contains well-spaced, padded chairs with arm rests and adequate leg room. Even under less-than-optimum conditions, folding chairs and seats with vinyl covers should be avoided, if possible.

3. ***Good Acoustics.*** A quiet, soundproof room with few distractions and good acoustics provides a comfortable setting for any type of meeting. If you are using a school or community center facility, make sure the meeting room is not adjacent to the gymnasium or music room. If you are aiming for a small, informal session, good acoustics have the added benefit of eliminating the need for microphones.

4. ***Proper Lighting.*** Such "minor" factors as bright, non-glare lighting are essential to both the mood of the meeting and to proper illumination of exhibits. Avoid any facility that has a dingy or faulty lighting system, and carefully double-check the room on the meeting date to replace any burned-out or flickering bulbs.

5. ***Good Ventilation.*** As with lighting and acoustics, proper heating and cooling are prerequisites for an objective, unemotional meeting environment. As a general rule, avoid un-air-conditioned buildings in summer. In light of current energy conservation measures, it is also a good idea to check on the heating limitations of most public facilities during the winter months.

6. ***Appropriateness*** to the format and purpose of the meeting. In selecting a facility, the format and objective of the meeting are, of course, of pivotal importance. If you are planning a large public meeting, with a formally structured presentation/question-and-answer agenda, the most reasonable choice is an auditorium, preferably in a school or other public facility. If you are aiming for an informal session with substantial interaction among participants, a large room with a flexible seating arrangement is preferable. Most States select a gymnasium, cafeteria, or all-purpose room for workshops, brainstorming sessions, or other informal meetings of this type. If a small advisory committee session is on your agenda, site selection can be limited to any comfortable room with a conference table. If you are targeting your effort to a particular group, such non-traditional meeting places as day-care centers or shopping malls can help attract participants.

In all cases, an appropriate facility includes adequate space for exhibits and audio-visual equipment, as well as sufficient electrical outlets to run the meeting in an organized professional manner.

A detailed discussion of the relationship between meeting format and room arrangement, accompanied by diagrams of suggested room layouts for a variety of meetings, is presented beginning on **page 12.**

AVOID USING A DAIS OR PLATFORM

Regardless of the meeting format, use of a dais or platform should be avoided. The psychological effect of "looking up" at a panel of agency officials is devastating and strongly reinforces the community's perception of distance from and insignificance to decision-makers. On the other hand, seating all meeting participants on one level is an effective way to encourage interaction by minimizing the "us against them" feeling. A principal goal of the site selection process should therefore be to locate a facility that permits the agency panel to be visible and audible without being seated on a dais or platform. Most auditoriums have ample space between the front of the stage and the first row of seats to accommodate a table and some chairs. If you place your panel in front of the stage, the positions of exhibits, microphones, court reporter, etc., may require some rethinking. But virtually all agencies that have tried a "peer-level" room arrangement would argue that it is well worth the effort.

Administrative Aspects

Once you have tentatively selected a suitable facility, a site inspection—preferably accompanied by the individual responsible for the facility—is essential. The inspection should take place no later than 20 working days prior to the meeting, in order to provide a cushion for selecting an alternate site, if necessary, and to provide adequate time for incorporating the date, time, and place of the meeting in all notification documents.

An on-site inspection of this nature serves a number of purposes and accomplishes a variety of administrative tasks. To maximize the value of the inspection, use it to:

- ***Check all physical aspects of the facility.*** In addition to the items discussed in previous sections of this chapter, this includes checking the availability and proximity of rest rooms; becoming familiar with the lighting and security systems; and verifying the existence of ramps, elevators, or other means to facilitate participation of elderly and disabled individuals. All meeting sites should adhere to the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ***Inquire about the availability of furniture, equipment, etc.*** This might include chairs, easels, audio-visual equipment, microphones, a public address system, extension cords, pointers, a coffee urn, a water pitcher, and glasses.
- ***Submit forms related to use of the building.*** These might include vouchers, insurance certificates, licenses, etc. Make sure you understand the forms and time frames for submission. A number of States have had the unfortunate experience of losing use of a building because they failed to process the necessary forms within the stipulated time period.
- ***Finalize negotiations relating to fees.*** If a rental fee is involved, inquire about the process for payment and for acquiring any forms that must be approved in advance of the meeting date. If custodial services are involved, firm up the cost and find out about any contractual restrictions.
- ***Familiarize yourself with rules and regulations regarding use of the building.*** This includes items such as availability of the meeting room before and after the meeting; closing time for the building itself; no-smoking regulations; rules regarding refreshments; special parking provisions; security regulations; and any energy conservation measures that would affect use of the building's heating or cooling systems.

KEEP AN INVENTORY OF SITES

*Several States now maintain site inventories, including vital statistics of each facility, along with personal observations and recommendations regarding use. In addition to being time- and cost-efficient, inventories provide valuable information that can be shared with other agencies and community groups. A simple, effective form for maintaining an inventory is shown in **Exhibit 1-10.***

Exhibit 1-10: SAMPLE SITE INVENTORY FORM

CITY: Anytown, U.S.A.

SITE: Public Access Building

ADDRESS: 400 South Any Street

PARKING AVAILABILITY: Adequate crowd capacity

TRANSIT ACCESS: Green line subway to New Station; or bus #36

SEATING CAPACITY: Up to 3,000 persons

Fixed seating X Movable seating ___

FACILITIES: Air X Heat X Restrooms X Handicapped accessibility X

Sign-in tables available X not available ___

P.A. SYSTEM: Good X Poor ___ None ___ Recorder jack No

AUDIO-VISUALS: Screen available X not available ___

Suitability for daytime hours: good X poor ___

CUSTODIAN/OTHER PERSONNEL REQUIRED: yes X no ___

RENTAL FEE: $50/hour

CONTACT: Tom Smith *PHONE:* 555-9061

REMARKS: Three smaller meeting rooms available adjacent to the auditorium

A final administrative item that should not be overlooked in site selection is preparation of a confirmation letter to the school principal, school superintendent, town manager, or other individual responsible for the facility. The letter should finalize arrangements for a specific time, date, and place and refer to all cost, custodial, and/or equipment requests discussed during the facility inspection. It need not be lengthy or complex, as **Exhibits 1-11 and 1-12** clearly indicate.

To assure that the necessary arrangements will be well-coordinated, a copy of the letter should be sent directly to the specific individual who will be responsible for the facility at the time of the meeting. Copies of vouchers, insurance certificates, and other essential paperwork should be attached.

7. Begin preparing graphic displays, handouts, audiovisual aids, and electronic presentations

Regardless of whether your meeting graphics, handouts, audio-visual aids, and electronic presentations are being prepared in-house or by an outside consultant, this activity constitutes one of your longest lead items. Before any specific display or handout can be developed, an overview of the short- and long-range requirements of the public involvement program is essential. For example, if your project necessitates only one or two public meetings, each with a specific discussion topic, graphics should be simple and directly related to the area of concern. An isolated meeting called to discuss potential noise impacts is a case in point. A brief narrative description of the problem, audio tapes of varying decibel ranges, and/or a model, photographic, or computer display of walls, berms, or other possible noise attenuation measures, would probably be sufficient.

On the other hand, if your public involvement program is structured to deal with a range of concerns, including preliminary alternatives development; social, environmental, and economic impacts; and right-of-way and relocation, a more comprehensive and cost- and time-consuming program will be needed. Models, slide/tape presentations, graphic displays, interactive video displays and kiosks, and computer simulations should be considered. Or you might decide to:

LET YOUR GRAPHICS EVOLVE WITH THE PROJECT

One eastern state reports that it places heavy emphasis on aerial photography as a basis for exhibits and meeting handouts. Aerials of an adequate scale are developed at the beginning of plan or project development and updated and refined as changes occur. In this way, a single aerial can effectively be used from project inception through public hearing. An aerial may delineate the project area for an introductory meeting; clearly indicate alternatives under consideration at an alignment meeting; and gradually be adapted to show right-of-way lines, areas of potential noise impact, etc., as the project evolves. Overlays are used as needed.

Exhibit 1-11: SAMPLE CONFIRMATION LETTER

May 8, 19__

Mr. C.A. Waltman, Clerk
Millville City Hall
Millville, New Jersey 08332

Dear Mr. Waltman:

This is to confirm the arrangements we made by telephone on April 24 to use the Commission Chambers for a New Jersey Department of Transportation public meeting concerning the Route 55 freeway in Millville and Maurice River. As discussed at that time, the Meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 25, at 7:30 P.M.

We plan to arrive at the Chambers at about 2:00 P.M. to set up our exhibits, check out the P.A. system, and make sure our audiovisual equipment is in working order. Once again, thank you for your offer to help us tape the proceedings.

One additional request: To facilitate registration of people as they arrive, could you provide us with a table and two chairs at the entrance to the Chambers?

Thank you for your help and cooperation. We look forward to seeing you on the 25th.

Sincerely,

Max W. Stewart
Public Hearing Officer
Public Involvement

Exhibit 1-12: SAMPLE CONFIRMATION LETTER

February 8, 19__

Ms. Peggy Counselman
Cherry Hill Public Schools
1155 Marlkress Road
Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08002

Dear Ms. Counselman:

This letter is to confirm the New Jersey Department of Transportation's reservation of the all-purpose room at the Woodcrest School on **Wednesday, March 9, between 3:30 P.M. and 9:00 P.M.**, for an information center, and on **Wednesday, March 16, between 6:30 P.M. and 11:00 P.M.** for a public hearing on the Woodcrest Station Ramps project.

On the 16th, we would appreciate your allowing us to use two six-foot tables and six chairs in front of the stage. One additional six-foot table and two chairs at the entrance to the all-purpose room would be used for registration. Also, please arrange the audience area to accommodate 120 people. This arrangement will not be necessary on the 9th, because the information center is an informal gathering for which a large open area is most appropriate.

I received the letter from Rowland C. Hill, Assistant to the Superintendent, informing us of the new guidelines that have been established for the operation of the school buildings during the remaining winter months. As of now, this has not changed our plans to hold the information center and public hearing on the above dates.

Your cooperation in allowing us to use your facilities is appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (609) 292-6802.

Sincerely,

Edward Katz
Community Services Technician
Public Involvement

In any case, an audio-visual program should aim at clear, non-technical, and self-explanatory materials that can be used for the widest possible audience. Since this guidebook includes separate chapters on audio-visuals/graphics and on handouts, we will not discuss the specific elements of selecting and preparing appropriate graphics at this point. However, keep in mind that the catchword "audio-visuals" refers to a range of both simple and extremely complex, expensive, and time-consuming components that includes the following:

- aerial photography
- slides
- scale models
- strip maps
- comparative charts, graphs, tables, and flow diagrams
- slide/tape presentations
- summary reports
- films
- still photographs
- newsletters
- photo montage
- artists' renderings
- videotapes
- interactive displays and kiosks
- computer presentations and simulations

Before selecting one or more of these vehicles for your community involvement program, make sure your staff is able to closely supervise and guide their development. ***Remember:*** Since graphics are prepared by a technical staff for a non-technical audience, *you* must serve as the translator. This requires time, creativity, and the courage to insist on reasonable modifications and adjustments. In addition to ongoing supervision, at least one week to 10 days should be reserved for review and final revisions prior to the meeting.

8. Identify your meeting presenters and firm up staffing arrangements

Although technical speakers and presenters are becoming increasingly unpopular because they add formality and an air of intimidation to the meeting environment, they are often the best way to conduct a large meeting. If a complicated agenda and range of issues are to be discussed, a panel of experts can substantially contribute to conduct of a meeting in a professional and well-paced manner.

There are several ways to structure a panel or group of presenters so that it will function as informally as possible:

- ***Keep the number of presenters small.*** In the past, technical panels often consisted of virtually every agency representative who chose to attend the meeting. The impression was a wall of bureaucrats facing a defenseless audience. An effective presentation need only include one specialist representing each major area that will be addressed or that may arise at the meeting. Other agency staffers and technical consultants should sit in the first rows of the audience, where they can be called upon as needed.

In most instances, three or four speakers are perfectly adequate. If your preliminary count of essential speakers exceeds this number, it may be a good idea to re-evaluate the meeting objective. You may be trying to do too much!

Identification of presenters should occur early in the meeting preparation process so they can help develop all meeting components, as well as participating in all meeting-related brainstorming and briefing sessions. In preparing for the actual meeting, speakers should review meeting guidelines and procedures, relevant technical project details, and controversial issues that may be brought up at the meeting.

IDENTIFY A BACK-UP PERSON IN EACH AREA.

Selection of technical presenters should always include identification of a second person to serve as a back-up in case of emergency. The back-up person should attend in-house preparatory sessions and become fully conversant with all aspects of the meeting.

One way to reduce the size of a panel is to deliver prepared speeches or to incorporate material from a "marginally-developed area" into a more focal presentation. For example, if the only available traffic data is an indication that traffic counts are being taken, report this fact yourself, rather than asking a member of your traffic unit to sit on the panel.

- ***Seat the panel slightly to the side of the meeting room.*** A front center arrangement, with its courtroom-like setting, is generally unnerving. To make the group of speakers less imposing, position it slightly to the left or to the right of your audience. Be sure to keep this fact in mind when you conduct your initial site inspection.

- ***Schedule recesses and other informal time periods.*** Breaks will enable speakers to mingle with the community and answer questions informally. They help humanize the environment and make the presenters appear less formal (and formidable). Recesses are discussed in greater detail in the section of this chapter on agendas.

9. Begin to prepare the technical presentation.

Determining criteria for an official agency presentation is a significant activity that should begin three to four weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. Preliminary decisions include:

- *Coordination.* An effective presentation is a well-integrated sum of many parts. Since material for the presentation will be received from a variety of disciplines and undoubtedly developed by people with diverse writing styles, it is a good idea to identify a presentation coordinator. The coordinator's responsibilities should include monitoring the overall schedule for developing the material, as well as rewriting and editing the final product. If your agency has developed a separate community involvement unit, a member of that unit should be given the coordinator assignment.

- *Content.* The structure and content of a presentation must be based on the specific goals and objectives of the meeting and on its relationship to the total planning or project development process. It is also crucial that a presentation anticipate issues that are likely to be of concern to the community, so that the material presented is both informative and responsive at the same time.

  Once you have developed a general outline, flesh it in with details relating to the project's ongoing work program: basic "umbrella" issues, techniques and processes, alternatives under consideration, anticipated impacts, and projected time frames and activities. Discuss the outline with all panel members to make sure that each discipline involved in the plan or project—planning, environmental programs, community involvement, and/or design—is given an opportunity to provide appropriate input.

- *Length.* A presentation should be as brief as possible without sacrificing pertinent substantive information. A 15-20 minute presentation generally constitutes an ideal time frame for introducing and describing the relevant issues and for maintaining audience interest. In no case should an agency presentation exceed 30 minutes. If it appears that a presentation will extend beyond this limitation, double-check your material to make sure that it is carefully geared to the scope and objectives of the meeting; does not include detailed statistical analyses that could be provided as handouts; does not cover materials extraneous to the issue being discussed.

  One agency has developed the following outline for presentations designed to introduce a new project to the community:

  I. *Introduction*—Community Involvement Office—10 minutes.
  Includes a discussion of the project's history; an indication of overall goals, objectives, and time frames; and an outline of the anticipated public involvement program.

  II. *Preliminary Engineering*—Design Office—5 minutes.
  Includes discussion of design criteria, a description of accepted techniques and processes, and an indication of the overall scope of engineering activities.

  III. *Environmental Assessment*—Environmental Office—10 minutes.
  Includes a description of the environmental process, a discussion of methodologies, and an indication of the range of planned activities.

- ***"Canned" or Spontaneous Presentation.*** In determining whether to provide a "canned" or a spontaneous presentation, it is important to be flexible and to realistically evaluate the available resources. Although an extemporaneous presentation is often more exciting than a prepared text, it should only be considered if your presenters have good communication skills.

  In all other instances, it is wise to opt for a thoroughly prepared and edited statement. A well-informed but inexperienced or nervous speaker is likely to appear unprepared and even incompetent without actually being either. It is definitely not worth the risk!

  One other factor may convince you to use prepared texts, even if agency staffers have developed excellent communication skills. That factor is the overall workload of panel members. Since it is possible that your project staff is simultaneously involved in several projects of equal magnitude, it may be unrealistic to assume that the time and attention needed to adequately prepare for an off-the-cuff speech is available. Once again, a prepared speech is your safest choice.

  In addition, reading a prepared text at a public meeting has several advantages. The most significant is the assurance that the presentation will be comprehensive, accurate, relevant, and brief. Stylistic quirks can be overcome, and speakers with a tendency to ramble can be controlled. The public can also benefit from a prepared text, in that copies can be reproduced and distributed to participants. For all concerned, the availability of a verbatim account provides a meeting record that is both reliable and accurate.

  Of course, reading a presentation has potential pitfalls. To guard against a monotonous delivery, people should be reminded to:

  1. speak slowly and distinctly;

  2. pause at appropriate intervals; and

  3. make frequent eye contact with the audience.

Once these basic issues have been resolved, it is imperative that an overall schedule for preparation be established. A team approach is generally recommended. This involves structuring an unofficial project team that consists of all designated panel members. The team assumes joint responsibility for preparation and review of individual components, including the agency presentation. Each team member is assigned the task of writing a specific portion of the presentation and submitting this material to the presentation coordinator at least two weeks prior to a meeting.

Although the coordinator circulates all portions of the presentation for general review and comments, s/he retains primary responsibility for the final rewrite and editing. In addition to focusing on overall content, the coordinator makes sure the presentation is:

- clear, concise, and free of technical jargon;

- specifically geared towards the people who are to receive it; and
- well-coordinated with the graphic displays, computer presentations, and/or handouts.

Last-minute modifications and revisions can be discussed at the in-house briefing. (Please see **page 48.**)

10. Establish guidelines and procedures for meeting conduct.

One of the most difficult preparatory tasks is often the establishment of specific guidelines and procedures for conducting your meeting. In the interest of informality, there is a natural tendency to lay down as few rules and regulations as possible. Yet an amorphous meeting is often a directionless meeting. And a meeting at which procedural matters are determined as a last resort inevitably gives an appearance of being arbitrary and unorganized. It is therefore essential to establish all aspects of meeting conduct well in advance of the meeting date, to publicize these procedural rules and regulations in the notification documents, and to stick to the announced guidelines.

In referring to a structured meeting with specific ground rules, we do *not* recommend that you follow *Robert's Rules of Order.* On the other hand, we do recommend that you specifically *determine* and inform the public of your guidelines for meeting conduct. Areas that require particular attention include:

- ***Time Limits.*** When planning a large meeting, it is generally good to set time limits for the meeting; the agency presentation; and individual speakers. A speaker time limit may sound authoritarian, but it is actually a very democratic process that assures every community member the opportunity to speak. Without time limits, meetings are prone to being monopolized by small groups of organized interest groups or by individuals who ramble on and waste everyone's time. Several agencies have found that a five-minute time limit is reasonable and that additional time can be set aside at the end of the meeting to hear people who would like to make additional comments.

  In setting a time limit, the most important factors are:

  1. announcing the time limit in advance of the meeting, preferably by including it in all notification documents and on the meeting agenda;
  2. stating that a time limit is in effect at the beginning of the meeting; and
  3. designating a timekeeper who has credibility with the audience. Whenever possible, try to get a community volunteer to assume the role.

BE FLEXIBLE.

It is a good idea to ask your timekeeper to inform each speaker when there are about 2 minutes of speaking time remaining. Regardless of this forewarning, some people will overshoot the mark. Don't cut them off mid-sentence and ***do*** *let those with only a few words left finish their statements.*

- ***Speaking Order.*** Regardless of your agency's past practices, it is probably time to eliminate a priority roster and to substitute a random speaking order. Many agencies throughout the country have abandoned the policy of calling on elected officials first; instead, speakers are now called on a first-come, first-speak basis. Other agencies no longer follow their former practice of calling on clustered groups of opponents and proponents—a technique that generally serves to polarize participants.

  One way to develop a random speaking order is to ask participants to sign a speakers' list or fill in speakers' cards as they enter the meeting. A list can be placed at the entrance to the meeting room and monitored by the official greeter. Anyone wishing to speak can sign the sheet, which is brought to the meeting conductor at the end of the agency presentation. To encourage people to participate, the list should remain open until after the recess between the presentation and the discussion/question-and-answer session. Some people may decide to speak after hearing the agency presentation and/or reviewing the exhibits and handouts.

  Speakers' cards can be distributed to all attendees and completed any time during the meeting. Agency representatives should collect the cards and bring them to the meeting conductor during the course of the proceedings.

  In deciding whether to use a list or cards, consider the following:

  1. Since a list collects names on a single sheet, it reduces the possibility of an agency's being accused of not calling speakers on a first-come, first-speak basis. If cards are used, it is harder to prove that names were not "shuffled" to suit an agency's particular objective.

  2. Logistically, the use of cards may be preferable. At a large meeting, with many people wanting to speak, long lines and confusion at the greeters' table can result.

  3. If a speakers' roster is being used to update the project mailing list, cards may simplify the process, since they can be grouped according to category (e.g., resident, officials, environmental groups).

  In making your decision, remember that "hand-raising" is not an acceptable alternative to use of a list or cards. In addition to being unprofessional and somewhat arbitrary, recognizing people based on a show of hands can make it difficult to control the meeting. ***One exception:*** If all names on the cards or list have been called, the meeting conductor may ask for a show of hands to see if any additional people wish to speak or if previous speakers wish to add to their earlier comments.

- ***Recording Techniques.*** It is important to determine how you will record your meeting proceedings well in advance of the meeting date. For large, structured meetings, the most common methods are use of a tape recorder or of a legal stenographer.

  Tape recorders are the preferred alternative, since they are less expensive, less visible, and more reliable in terms of capturing the mood or "flavor" of the meeting. Meeting coordinators should make sure the equipment operates properly and at sufficient volume to capture what is being said.

  In those rare instances when a verbatim record is required, a legal stenographer may be the only alternative. If the project is particularly controversial and likely to result in prolonged detailed analysis and/or litigation, use both a legal stenographer and a tape recorder. One agency reports that a combination of the two provides a complete and accurate picture that has proven beneficial in more than one dispute.

ANNOUNCE AVAILABILITY OF THE MEETING RECORD

Whether you use a tape recorder or a legal stenographer, it is good to inform the community that the meeting record will be available for public review. In addition to contributing to open communications, announcing the availability of the tape or transcript serves as reinforcement that the meeting record will not merely be "filed away."

For less formal meetings, and particularly for workshops, a flip chart is a simple and popular recording technique. In addition to being a highly visible aid that can be referred to in developing a meeting summary, it is probably the only unobtrusive way to develop a fairly accurate record of an informal session.

11. Begin to prepare meeting notifications.

Developing an appropriate program of notification techniques for a project depends on factors such as type of project, nature of the involved community, number of potentially affected people, size of the study area, and agency resources, including time, budget, and personnel. For example, a meeting scheduled to discuss a local road improvement in a rural community would probably require only:

1. mailing individual letters of invitation to residents, property owners, elected and appointed officials, and civic organizations; and

2. issuing a press release to local newspapers.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, a meeting to discuss a proposed lengthy extension of an interstate highway would require a much greater notification effort. In addition to letters of invitation and press releases, newsletters, leaflets, posters, paid ads, news sheets, television and radio spots, FAXes, 800 numbers, bulletin board listings, and on-line information might be used in varying combinations. It is important to remember that none of these techniques should be considered "the best" or used in isolation. Each can only be effective if used in proper combination with one or (preferably) more of the others.

Whether the meeting is simple or complex, consultation with key group leaders—including those who represent the interests of ethnic, minority, and low-income groups and people with disabilities—may suggest the best ways to reach the affected community. This can be done in leader interviews or in informal calls and conversations once you have established relationships with community leaders.

Distribution of notification documents depends heavily on the completeness of the project mailing list, particularly in the middle to late stages of project development. (Please see the **"Direct Mailings" section of Chapter 3** for specific information on developing, updating, and maintaining mailing lists.)

As a rule of thumb, a mailing list should include the following:
- potentially affected residents and property owners;
- federal and state elected officials;
- local elected and appointed officials;
- county elected and appointed officials;
- transportation, civic, and environmental groups in the project area; and
- (usually after the first meeting) any interested member of the public.

Since all aspects of selecting, developing, and distributing notification documents are discussed in **Chapter 3: Notification Techniques,** we do not elaborate on specific elements at this point. However, in terms of meeting preparation, it is helpful to keep in mind the following time frames:

Type of Notification	Time Frame for Distribution
Letters of invitation	Send 12-14 days prior to meeting.
Press releases	Follow set media deadlines; send to appear in news media 5-7 days before meeting, and again 1-2 days before meeting.
Newsletters (usually sent bulk mail)	Mail 17-20 days prior to meeting.
Posters	Post at least two weeks prior to meeting.
Electronic bulletin boards	Post at least two weeks prior to meeting.
800 numbers and hotlines	Post at least two weeks prior to meeting.

12. Develop the meeting agenda.

A good agenda is a valuable guidebook for both agency and community. It facilitates conduct of an orderly, goal-oriented meeting by succinctly mapping out the content and the specific time frames involved.

Agendas are essential for all types of small and large meetings. In every case, they should be clearly outlined, step-by-step, with brief explanatory material as needed. Although the specific nature and composition of an agenda depends on the type of meeting and the type of project, several general points should be kept in mind:

1. In developing an agenda, particularly for a small meeting, workshop, or advisory group session, contact participants to discuss the proposed agenda and determine the need for additional items.

2. Distribute copies of the agenda with your letters of invitation or as part of newsletters and other notification documents.

3. Post the agenda on your electronic bulletin board.

4. Always have an adequate supply of agendas at the greeters' table for attendees. Agendas should be an integral part of every handout packet.

5. Whenever possible, include approximate times next to each agenda item.

6. Make sure the agenda has flexibility, so that it can be adjusted to reflect specific public interests and concerns expressed at the meeting.

Large Meetings

At a minimum, an agenda for a large meeting includes introductory remarks, a technical presentation, and a discussion/question-and-answer session.

However, this basic agenda outlines a very formal gathering, in which there is little room for interaction. In order to foster informality at a large meeting, a number of agencies now incorporate the following elements.

- ***Recesses.*** A recess between the agency presentation and the organized question-and-answer period provides participants an opportunity to review exhibits, converse among themselves, and discuss project issues with agency representatives on a one-to-one basis. A recess is a valuable technique for breaking up the tension and formality of a large meeting and for encouraging people to express their ideas and feelings in a relaxed atmosphere.

- ***Information sessions.*** An unstructured information session, at which exhibits, technical documents, and agency staff members are available for a period prior to the start of a meeting, is a popular technique for informally integrating agency and community participants. By "breaking the ice" and establishing rapport before formal proceedings begin, it often mitigates against development of an "us-against-them" feeling. In addition, an information session is an excellent time to deal with individual questions and personal concerns that would otherwise be brought up during the question-and-answer period. A typical agenda for a large meeting with an information session is indicated below:

6:30 P.M.	Information Session (hallway; small meeting rooms)
7:30 P.M.	Agency Presentation (auditorium)
8:00 P.M.	Recess—to informally view exhibits (hallway; small meeting rooms)
8:30 P.M.	Formal Question-and-Answer/Comment Period (auditorium).

- *Discussion groups.* Some agencies incorporate informality into their large meeting formats by providing a period of time after the formal presentation for small discussion groups. Each group is guided by an agency representative and deals with a specific problem or area of interest. After brainstorming, prioritizing, and sometimes reaching consensus, each group presents a summary report to the entire gathering. A typical agenda for a large meeting with an information session is indicated below:

7:30 P.M.	Agency Presentation (auditorium)
8:00 P.M.	Small Discussion Groups (individual meeting rooms)
9:15 P.M.	Summary Reports and Discussion (auditorium)

One Middle Atlantic state included both information sessions and discussion groups at meetings called to discuss a controversial bypass proposal. A sample agenda appears in **Exhibit 1-13.**

BE CREATIVE!

There are many innovative and cost-effective ways to present an agenda. One Midwestern state developed a meeting handout for an interchange project that is simple, clear, and comprehensive. It is interesting conceptually because it combines a variety of features, including agenda, project map, name of contact person and comment coupon. It appears here as **Exhibit 1-14.**

Small Meetings

Small meeting agendas are generally more detailed than large meeting agendas and often include specific information regarding techniques and guidelines for conduct of the session. For example, in most instances a workshop requires two separate agendas: an overall meeting agenda and an outline for the small discussion groups.

Exhibit 1-13: SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

MEETING AGENDA

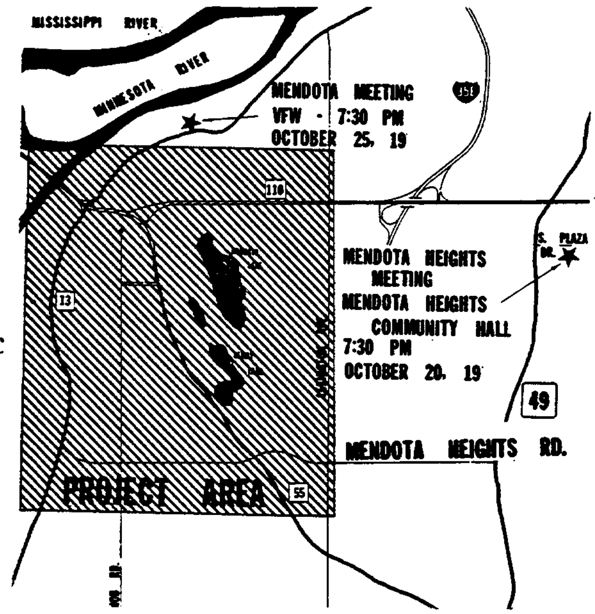
TIME	ACTIVITY
6:00 P.M.	*Open Table Discussion* (hallway) Four tables containing various technical study reports have been set up in the hallway outside the auditorium and cafeteria. The four tables include information on the following: Table 1: Air and noise studies Table 2: Socio-economic and land use studies Table 3: Historical, terrestrial, and water ecology and soils and geographical studies Table 4: Relocation assistance and utility information Please make a point to inspect and review the information presented at *each* table.
7:30 P.M.	*Technical-environmental Presentation* (auditorium) A PennDOT representative will describe the study alternatives and the associated environmental, social, and economic consequences from the viewpoint of the agency.
8:00 P.M.	*Open Table Discussion* (hallway) If you still have questions concerning the highway alternatives and the impacts to the community presented, please discuss them with the technical expert assigned to each table.
8:15 P.M.	*Workshop* (cafeteria) During the workshop, small groups of citizens will be asked to evaluate each alternate alignment. You will be asked to list the positive and negative features associated with each line. Once the group has completed the list of positive and negative features, the group will then be asked to examine the list of negative features and suggest ways to eliminate or reduce the adverse impact. By evaluating each alternative in this way, you will be helping PennDOT recommend tradeoffs or mitigation measures that may be incorporated into the final design of the recommended alternative.
9:30 P.M.	*General Question-and-Answer Session* (cafeteria) *Open Table Discussions* (hallway)

Exhibit 1-14 SAMPLE AGENDA WITH MAP & COMMENT FORM

Thank you for attending!

Tonight we will bring you up-to-date on the Mendota Interchange Project. Briefly, the topics of discussion will include:

1. The planning process
2. History of the Mendota Bridge traffic problems and previously proposed solutions
3. Development of present proposal
4. Question and answer session



Use the space below to write your questions, comments, or suggestions. We'll try to respond to these questions tonight. If necessary, we'll get back to you on an individual basis—just give us your name and address or phone number.

If you have questions or comments in the future, feel free to call Project Manager John Smith at 555-4500, extension 200.

- -

COMMENTS:

____

The overall agenda always includes introductory remarks, an opening/technical presentation, small group discussions, a reporting period, and closing remarks. **Exhibit 1-15** offers a sample workshop agenda.

A discussion group agenda sometimes includes detailed descriptions of such activities as brainstorming, consensus development, role playing, games, simulations, etc. A sample of a basic discussion group agenda appears in **Exhibit 1-16.**

13. Review graphic displays and handouts for acceptability.

Monitoring the preparation of exhibits and handouts is an essential *ongoing* activity. Periodic review, weekly at first and more frequently during the final days of preparation, is the best assurance that the final product will be acceptable. *Never lose control* of this activity and *never assume* that the technical expertise of the in-house person or consultant to whom this task has been assigned will assure production of materials that are effective for community use. Finally, make sure that all displays and handouts are ready at least one week before the meeting so that they can be used during the in-house briefing session.

14. Conduct an in-house briefing session.

Regardless of whether you are preparing a large or a small meeting, an in-house briefing should be conducted to review all substantive and administrative items. In addition to safeguarding against errors and omissions, a briefing greatly adds to the comfort and self-confidence of presenters and other agency participants.

It is most effective to hold the briefing a few days prior to the meeting date, so that final versions of presentations, handouts, exhibits, etc., will be available. The briefing agenda should, at a minimum, include the following:

- a review of the meeting format, agenda, and general guidelines and procedures for meeting conduct;
- a review of all presentations and an indication of time limits for their delivery;
- a dry-run of all presentations to ensure consistency, clarity, and cohesiveness; this should include "practicing" ways to maximize coordination between speaker and pointer;
- a discussion of possible questions and controversial issues and an indication of appropriate responses;
- a review of slides, tapes, films, computer presentations, and other audio-visual aids to assure familiarity and thorough understanding.

Exhibit 1-15: SAMPLE WORKSHOP AGENDA

WORKSHOP AGENDA

TIME	ACTIVITY
7:00 P.M.	Welcome
7:05 P.M.	Introduction to workshop and background
7:25 P.M.	General question-and-answer period
7:30 P.M.	Table-top discussion • Transportation needs and deficiencies • Recommended solutions to needs and deficiencies • Priority ranking exercise for transportation system management
8:55 P.M.	Completion of registration card and demographic questionnaire
9:00 P.M.	Short report-out from tables
9:05 P.M.	Closing remarks

Exhibit 1-16: SAMPLE DISCUSSION GROUP AGENDA

AGENDA

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 P.M.	Break into small groups of six to eight people. Distribute handouts, including worksheets and questionnaires. Select a recorder to preserve the results of the discussion on a flip chart. Select a spokesperson to monitor the agenda and overall discussion.
8:10 P.M.	Review handouts and define discussion topics.
8:20 P.M.	Discuss the topic and define the principal issues and ideas.
8:50 P.M.	Prioritize and record the most important ideas.
9:00 P.M.	Complete questionnaires (optional).
9:20 P.M.	Report discussion results to entire group.

In addition, before the briefing session closes, it should be ascertained that:

1. all agency personnel have specific directions to the meeting site;
2. all agency personnel will arrive at the site one hour early to informally answer questions;
3. arrangements have been made to properly transport all exhibits to the site; and
4. a specifically designated individual will handle all equipment at the meeting.

MEETING CONDUCT

Proper preparation can eliminate much of the uncertainty, difficulty, and anxiety that often accompany meeting conduct. If the items covered in the meeting preparation section of this chapter have been carefully and conscientiously completed, a major meeting calamity is very unlikely.

However, meeting preparation is never foolproof. Last-minute problems, unpredictable emotional factors, and external events that relate either closely or vaguely to the project or plan under discussion can all influence the conduct of a meeting.

Without reiterating the bulk of the information included in the meeting preparation section, we will highlight a few significant points pertaining to effective meeting conduct:

1. ***Arrive several hours early*** to prepare the room, check out equipment, and be available for prior discussion or informal questions.
2. ***Arrange the room according to the pre-selected meeting format.*** Once tables, chairs, microphones, etc., have been set up, make sure that displays are visible from all sides of the room. If you are conducting a large, traditionally structured meeting, place the major graphic display(s) and the floor microphone to be used by the community on the same side of the speakers' table. This will enable speakers to readily refer to the display(s) while presenting their questions and statements. Displays should be placed on easels rather than tacked on the walls.
3. ***Walk around the room to get a feel for its environment.***
4. ***Set up a greeters' table,*** so that community participants will be welcomed and equipped with handouts and agendas as soon as they arrive.
5. ***Make sure there is an adequate supply of registration cards,*** attendance lists, speakers' cards/lists, and/or self-addressed, stamped envelopes for mailing list and other follow-up purposes.

6. Once the starting time has come, check to see whether it appears that most people have arrived. ***Don't postpone your meeting*** unless there is an obvious flow of arrivals.

7. Begin the meeting. Welcome all attendees. Restate the purpose of the meeting. Establish and review the meeting agenda and procedural ground rules. Assure attendees that they will have adequate opportunity to ask questions and make comments. ***Speak in lay language.***

8. At large meetings, ***introduce all speakers and/or other agency participants.*** At small meetings, let participants identify themselves as the meeting unfolds.

9. As you discuss each topic, closely ***observe audience reaction.*** If interest is waning, ask the audience if it would prefer moving on to another area.

10. ***Keep to no more than three issues.*** Do not give the audience more information than it can easily absorb. Remember, an agency presentation should be limited to a maximum of 20 minutes.

11. Make sure that your speakers and other agency representatives/consultants can ***adequately cover all questions and areas of concern.*** If answers are not known, say so! Remember that honesty *is* appreciated and that waffling is very transparent.

12. Before the meeting ends, ***discuss plans for future meetings.*** If a tentative meeting program has been developed, ask participants to suggest additional topics or recommendations for improving attendance, modifying format, etc. If more meetings have not been planned, ask the audience to participate in deciding whether they are necessary.

13. Close the meeting. ***Summarize basic concepts and ideas*** and ask for any questions or concerns that should be addressed as part of a follow-up program.

14. Remain at the meeting site until all attendees have left, to answer questions or discuss concerns individually.

1. Meeting conductors

Agencies are increasingly realizing that a meeting conductor can have a major impact on the outcome of a meeting. But finding satisfactory meeting conductors is a difficult task. In the past, people were often rather arbitrarily "assigned" the job of moderating or chairing a meeting, without much consideration of the degree to which background, experience, communications skills, or attitude were conducive to the assignment.

In transportation agencies, meetings were (and to some extent, still are) often conducted by district engineers or other technical specialists. A commonly used criterion was the fact that an individual had been running meetings and hearings for a number of years. But times and public involvement have changed, and a conductor who has not evolved with changes in environmental requirements and public expectations is no longer a good choice. To achieve optimum results and make sure a meeting runs smoothly, many agencies employ trained, experienced consultants as meeting facilitators, particularly in controversial situations where the agency staff's objectivity may be in question or the complexity of the issues calls for careful coordination of a number of meeting elements. The facilitators can be especially helpful in conflict resolution meetings.

Today, whether an outside consultant or an in-house staff person, an effective meeting conductor must exhibit the following characteristics: open-mindedness, flexibility, neutrality, objectivity, a lack of defensiveness about the proposed action, and patience, combined with a lack of condescension. A conductor's primary goals should be to:

- clarify the discussion, respond to general questions and comments, and refer detailed questions to a panel of technical specialists;
- develop good communication skills, so that the agency can present itself as sincerely interested in hearing from the public and able to objectively receive and evaluate a wide range of input and opinion.
- develop the self-confidence needed to assure that every participant will feel that his/her input has contributed to the meeting, whether that input is factual or emotional.

In selecting a meeting conductor, it is particularly important to fit the person to the sociopolitical character of the project and to the culture of the community. This is particularly important when communicating with ethnic, non-English-speaking, and minority groups. A mild-mannered conductor may be intimidated at a controversial meeting, and a leader in a three-piece business suit may well cause polarization in a low-income area. Although such examples probably seem obvious in their inappropriateness, they have occurred in the past. Other, more subtle factors should be considered as well:

1. Is the person identified with (as being on the side of) the agency or the community?
2. If employed by or identified with the agency, is the person able to be seen as objective?
3. If identified with the community, does the person represent any specific interest or group?
4. What experience does the person have in conducting meetings or hearings?
5. Does the person have any predetermined opinions about the outcome of the project?
6. Does the person have any vested interest in the outcome of the proposed action?

7. *Why* is this person being considered?

In all cases, a meeting conductor should be sufficiently knowledgeable about the project or other proposed action to respond to general questions and comments. Beyond that, agreement must be worked out with the project staff as to how staff specialists will deal with specific technical areas.

In most instances, it is advisable to select an in-house person to conduct a meeting. Familiarity with project details, agency procedures, etc., are a distinct advantage. However, at times an acceptable agency conductor cannot be found. There may, on the other hand, be someone outside the agency who would be effective. This person might be a member of a regional planning board, a former elected official who has maintained visibility and credibility, or some other person known for fairness and objectivity. She or he might also be an outside person with special expertise in meeting facilitation.

2. Preparing to conduct a meeting

There are no hard-and-fast rules for becoming a good meeting conductor, although practice is probably more important than formal training. To develop the essential techniques and attitudes to a point where they can be applied with ease, a great deal of individual exercise is needed.

In general, meeting conductors should practice on audiences that are less volatile than the public at a transportation planning or project development meeting. As a district office meeting conductor for one agency recently put it, people who conduct meetings should get experience off-the-job through extracurricular activities and shouldn't learn by "making fools of themselves in the name of the...department."

One place to experiment is your own community. Civic associations provide an excellent opportunity to practice meeting techniques in a fairly comfortable atmosphere. You can acquire a great deal of experience without some of the risks and challenges involved in representing your agency.

If this type of public practice is not possible, "rehearse" in front of a mirror or, better yet, in front of a friend and/or relative who can offer objective, constructive criticism. This type of practice is a particularly good test of the degree to which you have eliminated the use of technical jargon from your presentation.

Another opportunity to test yourself is the in-house briefing. A dry run with agency peers provides an excellent environment for self-evaluation of speaking abilities—and particularly of skill in answering questions.

And finally, videotaping either a practice or an actual "performance" offers a rare chance for you to examine your own overall communications skills, as well as your mannerisms, tone of voice, and body language. If possible, ask other people to help you evaluate your performance. If the opportunity exists to compare several videotapes after conducting a number of meetings, you will probably be able to note enough improvements to feel reassured and a good deal more self-confident.

Ultimately, your effectiveness as a meeting conductor depends on a combination of subjective and objective factors that relate to both you and the audience with which you are dealing. The following tips are offered as general guidelines for maximizing the chances for success:

1. Speak clearly.
2. Speak as briefly as possible—and to the point.
3. Show your interest in the subject. Actively listen to all comments and questions.
4. Be sincere.
5. Keep the facts straight. If you are expressing an opinion, say so.
6. Maintain eye contact.
7. Don't be defensive. If you are, examine *why.* Is the agency's case weak?
8. Explain, but don't apologize.
9. Be specific about what can/will be done. Be equally specific about what cannot be done.
10. Be honest. If you don't know, say so.
11. Forget about gestures. They will come naturally if you "let go" and focus on the subject at hand.
12. Refer to your graphics as much as possible. Lay people remember graphic illustrations but may neither grasp nor remember level-of-service numbers.
13. Use plain English. If you think you do and are told you don't, get help.
14. Be aware that some people in your audience may not understand or speak English well, and speak accordingly.
15. Be objective.
16. Be friendly.
17. Be concise. Stick to pertinent points and move to additional detail only when your audience is ready.

MEETING FOLLOW-UP

Effective meeting follow-up is a multi-pronged activity that should be anticipated and mapped out well in advance of a meeting. A comprehensive program of post-meeting activities includes many components, such as analysis, evaluation, and incorporation of community input; follow-up communication with the public by means of correspondence, newsletters, telephone calls, on-line communications, and/or additional meetings; and self-evaluation of the meeting and of agency participants.

1. Evaluation of public input

As a first step in reviewing the input from a public meeting, the meeting record should be summarized and edited into an agency report. This activity can be performed by any member of the team. The resulting report should include a list of all substantive issues and unanswered questions, along with an indication of the team member responsible for the disposition of each item. Time frames for developing public responses should be established.

The importance of responding to *every* valid question and comment raised at a public meeting cannot be over-emphasized. Agency credibility, the viability of the project, and the overall success of the community involvement program are dependent on expeditious and thorough response. If the issue raised is complex and requires substantial and time-consuming research or analysis, an interim letter should be considered. If a response can be developed within a reasonable time frame, a personal letter should be prepared as quickly as possible.

Some agencies have found that if an issue of general interest is raised at a small meeting, a letter to each attendee is a much-appreciated gesture. The letter can be brief and merely enumerate each point that was discussed, along with a specific response or reaction.

If agency resources permit, a newsletter is an effective means of following up a well-attended meeting or one that dealt with a plan or project covering a large geographic area. The newsletter, to be distributed to each individual and organization on the project mailing list, can summarize the events of the meeting and list and respond to the most salient issues. In addition to being a good means of disseminating information, a newsletter clearly demonstrates an agency's conscientious effort to involve the public in the transportation process.

Focus on internal coordination. Although community outreach elements of meeting follow-up are extremely important, they constitute only the final step in an agency's input evaluation process. In reality, these communication activities are useless unless preceded by thorough and objective internal examination of public input. In many agencies, getting decision-makers to focus on and seriously consider the incorporation of community input is the most difficult and frustrating part of the post-meeting process. It is also the most important, since responsible advocacy is the backbone of an agency team's community involvement responsibility. Several agencies report that detailing community concerns in a comprehensive, widely-circulated internal memorandum is an effective way to begin the input evaluation process. The memo is generally followed up by a "skull" session with all involved agency representatives. Additional internal review and discussion is then scheduled, as necessary. Despite the possible aggravation and unpleasantness involved, these agencies are convinced that hard-nosed persistence is essential in pressing for adequate consideration of valid public meeting input. Without it, a community involvement program is likely to lose its purpose and credibility.

2. Agency self-evaluation

An objective internal evaluation following every public meeting is an effective technique that can substantially contribute to the success of future public involvement activities. The self-evaluation process should include a critique of the meeting itself, as well as separate critiques of each agency participant.

DEFINE YOUR EVALUATION TEAM

Participants in an internal evaluation session should, at a minimum, include all plan or project team members. Some agencies find it helpful to add a staff member who did not participate in the meeting and who can therefore focus the discussion and stimulate honest comments without bias. One New England State's Department of Public Works has gone a step further, using students from the State university as part of its evaluation team.

In critiquing the meeting as a whole, both productivity and effectiveness of communication should be considered. The critique should focus on—as well as culminate in—consideration of whether the agency's goals were achieved. It is often helpful to first ask "What went wrong?" and "What went right?" before dealing with more specific questions, such as the following:

- Was the meeting turnout as large as expected? If not, was it a result of inadequate notification? improper mailing list? public apathy? inclement weather? conflict with another meeting; a religious, political, or sporting event; or a popular television program? How could we have improved attendance?
- Were individuals who attempted to dominate the meeting dealt with directly and to the satisfaction of the group as a whole?
- Did the agency appear to control the content of the meeting?
- Were agency comments and presentations objective, or did they try to persuade?
- Did the agency give proper attention to environmental and other non-engineering data, or did the engineering aspects overshadow the meeting?
- Was the atmosphere comfortable and conducive to open participation by all attendees? If only a few participated, was it because the purpose of the meeting was not clearly expressed in the notification? agency presentation was too tech-

nical or too general? team members, particularly the conductor, displayed an aloof, indifferent, or hostile attitude?

- If work groups were used, were any groups particularly ineffective or especially productive? Why?

- Were staff monitors available, but not obtrusive, during work group exercises?

- Was the format appropriate to the type of meeting? If not, were there suggestions or attempts to change it?

- Were the goals and end products of the meeting clearly established and communicated?

- Was the agenda reviewed and acceptable to the attendees?

- Were questions and comments invited throughout? Did agency personnel adequately respond to questions?

- Were agency representatives responsive to participant questions and comments?

- Was the meeting closed out and summarized, rather than just ended?

- Were participants given opportunities to provide additional input; e.g., via mail-in comment cards, telephone hotlines, or on-line connections to the agency?

- Did the meeting achieve the goal(s) outlined by the agency? If so, how? If not, why not?

Evaluation of individual agency participants is usually a more difficult—and more sensitive—matter. To minimize "hurt feelings" and maximize open communication and constructive comments, it is good to ask individuals to critique themselves first, with peer comments following. Evaluations should initially be in writing but should be followed by verbal elaboration.

All members of the evaluation team should consider the following questions:

- Was each presentation delivered with appropriate volume, speed, enthusiasm, eye contact, and gestures?

- Was each presentation well-organized, supported by good audiovisuals, and free of technical jargon?

- Were informal comments complete and responsive to the concerns expressed and the questions asked?

- Did agency participants appear comfortable and willing to respond to inquiries?

- Did any behavior *inhibit* participation? Did any behavior *enhance* participation? Was the audience attentive during the presentation and/or comments?

- Did the personality of the agency participant cause him/her to be asked more questions than others?

To assist team evaluators, it is helpful to provide a checklist of behavior that assists or detracts from effective meeting performance. The following could be included:

Positive Behaviors	*Negative Behaviors*
Openness	Defensiveness
Welcoming comments	Avoiding comments
Encouraging discussion	Shutting off discussion
Friendliness	Aggressiveness
Supportiveness	Condescension
Flexibility in procedures	Retreating to rules for safety
Objectivity	Professional bias
Responsiveness to participant concerns and questions	Insensitivity to the public's viewpoints

If comment cards or other evaluation forms were distributed at the meeting, a final step in the internal evaluation process should be a comparison of community and agency comments. Areas of agreement and disagreement should be carefully examined, a summary developed, and recommendations formulated in priority order.

Chapter 2. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings are perhaps the oldest and most fundamental means of involving the public in governmental decision-making. Years ago, in fact, they were all too often the *only* means. As the sole legally required community outreach activity, public hearings became synonymous with public involvement. The result, not unexpectedly, was a repeated pattern of volatile and unproductive sessions that served the dysfunction of reinforcing negative attitudes on the part of both agency and community.

Today, most transportation agencies realize that a hearing is only as worthwhile as the public involvement program that preceded it. As a distinct and isolated event, it is virtually useless. However, as the capstone to an early, ongoing, and systematic process of public involvement activities, it can be a rewarding, productive, and civilized event—no longer just a painful means of "satisfying legal requirements."

Ideally, a public hearing offers no surprises; it is simply a forum for official presentation of ideas that are the culmination of a joint community/agency planning effort. Increasingly, public hearings throughout the country are approaching this ideal. Formerly regarded as a soapbox for argumentation, criticism, and debate, the public hearing is rapidly becoming a medium for the *official* expression of positions that have been nurtured and developed throughout the pre-hearing public involvement process.

Ironically, this means that, in some agencies, public hearings are becoming less interactive and more formal at the same time that public meetings and other aspects of public involvement programs are emphasizing increased interaction and informality. To make hearings more flexible and user-friendly, many agencies are adopting the open forum public hearing as an alternative to traditional public hearings.

This chapter examines a number of ways in which agencies throughout the country update their public hearing format and conduct. It is by no means intended as a dictum, but rather as an introduction to a variety of innovative techniques. Indeed, the selection of appropriate public involvement practices is a highly individualized activity. In all cases, it must reflect the specific characteristics of the affected communities and the project itself, as well as the existing resources and limitations of the agency. The public hearing components discussed in this chapter should therefore *always* be examined within the overall context of a particular project before being applied.

HEARING PREPARATION

Many aspects of public hearing preparation are similar to the activities and efforts involved in preparing for a public meeting. Rather than rehash those techniques and processes, this chapter concentrates on elements unique to preparing for a hearing, as well as those that require extra effort and attention.

In developing a time frame for public hearing preparation, a number of factors must be considered. The most important is the projected completion date of the draft environmental document (environmental impact statement or environmental assessment). By

Federal regulation, a public hearing cannot be held sooner than 15 days after distribution of the EA or draft EIS. State public involvement/public hearing procedures specify required State notice periods varying from 15 to approximately 40 days. Careful monitoring of the progress of the environmental document helps determine when to schedule the hearing and when to begin preparations for it.

If a public hearing is to be held on a project or plan for which there is no environmental document, the hearing date depends on completion of specific planning and/or design activities. Once again, close internal coordination is essential if a realistic program of hearing preparation activities is to be developed.

Some agencies have found it helpful to prepare memoranda that outline activities that must be completed as part of the hearing preparation process. These memoranda can function as ongoing agendas, guidelines at the pre-hearing briefing, and final shopping-list review documents to be referred to on the day of the hearing. An example is included as **Exhibit 2-1.** In addition, a checklist of hearing preparation activities is included here as **Appendix II.**

1. Long-range preparatory activities

To properly prepare for a hearing, it is advisable to focus on a number of specific tasks *well in advance* of the projected hearing date. A 15-day period is not enough time to develop adequate exhibits, notification and handout documents, audio-visual materials, computer presentations, etc. As part of an ongoing public involvement process, the following essential hearing elements can be decided upon and finalized months ahead of time:

A. Format

One of the most dramatic recent changes in public hearings throughout the country is the variety of formats with which some State agencies are experimenting. In addition to attempts to modify the traditional hearing format, a number of agencies report efforts to totally revamp the hearing to "make it more like a meeting." Legal requirements notwithstanding, public hearings are decidedly becoming less of a boiler-plate operation.

Traditional Format

Few agencies report that they still conduct the "traditional" public hearing that was standard prior to adoption of a more comprehensive public involvement perspective. Although many continue to use the traditional format (see **Exhibit 1-3)** as the basis of their operations, most have incorporated a significant number of elements designed to increase the effectiveness of the hearing process.

The traditional format was developed at a time when hearings usually afforded the sole opportunity for public involvement in transportation planning. Consequently, the format was superficially structured to allow for maximum interaction. In reality, the two-way "communication" that resulted meant little, since the project was virtually cast in concrete.

Exhibit 2-1: HEARING PREPARATION "SHOPPING LIST"

In the interests of standardizing and simplifying internal public hearing procedures, here is a "shopping list" that outlines an area coordinator's essential public hearing tasks and highlights activities that require particular attention.

Preliminary Activities

Firm up the location and tentative times and dates for the hearing and information centers. At the same time, prepare and/or draft the following:

- public hearing notice
- press release
- EIS transmittal letter
- invitational letter
- newsletter
- speaker chart
- acknowledgment letter regarding speaker time
- paid ad

Mechanics

Hearing Officer — Where an outside hearing officer is to be retained, make sure the necessary purchase order, commission action, and consultant selection committee papers are prepared. Meet with the hearing officer to provide him/her with the ground rules and a packet of materials, including all relevant background reports. It is important to explain very carefully our public involvement procedures and the physical setup and mechanics of the hearing to the hearing officer, since s/he is probably unfamiliar with our activities. The hearing officer should be reminded to include the following items in the repertoire:

- announcement of a 5-minute speaking limit
- announcement of audiovisual presentation, when appropriate
- reiteration that registration will take place in adjacent rooms and that written testimony will be accepted until a given day
- announcement of appropriate breaks.

Taping Hearing — Be sure to provide for all expenditures, including purchase of equipment. Also check equipment carefully prior to the hearing. *(Remember Murphy's Law.)*

Court Stenographer — Make and confirm all necessary arrangements for retaining the services of a court stenographer.

Audiovisual Aids — Make sure all audiovisual aids are in good shape well in advance of the hearing. Where slide, tape, or computer presentations are to be used, give yourself enough time to revise and/or correct any problems.

Staffing Tables — Where a multi-day hearing is being planned, prepare office-wide and department-wide staffing tables to assure adequate staffing of the hearing at all times. Also develop lodging estimates and prepare necessary paperwork well in advance.

Content

Presentation — In developing the public hearing presentation to be given by the area coordinator, be sure to double-check the following:

- **Introductory comments** (5 minutes) — These should include:
  - the purpose of the hearing;

Exhibit 2-1, continued

- the scope and location of the proposal;
- regulations governing the hearing;
- reference to the public notice; explanation of due dates for comments and of fact that verbatim written transcript will be made; reference to fact that handout packet will be submitted as part of the hearing record;

Also, introductory comments should include:

- a brief history of the project;
- the reason for the original studies and their validity or substantiation;
- prior approvals and/or objections;
- recent history of project, including information concerning EIS, EA, and community involvement requirements.

In addition, a design hearing should provide information concerning the date of the corridor hearing and the dates of all approvals.

- **Alternates and impacts** (15-20 minutes) — This section should begin with the statement, "A number of alternatives, including a no-build option, have been studied," followed by a brief description of alternatives that have been eliminated and the reasons for eliminating them. The bulk of the discussion of alternatives should focus on the location of each and any major landmarks or distinguishing features (overpasses, etc.). In a large project with a number of alternatives, impacts should focus on major advantages or greatest or least effect rather than on all characteristics. An effective way to allude to all environmental, social, and economic impacts under consideration is to refer to charts for a detailed comparison. Impacts described on charts should include displacement (residential and business); air; noise; water; natural resources; costs (right-of-way and construction); flooding; 4F involvement; 106 involvement; interchanges and structures; traffic (a discussion of general trends); and loss of ratables.

- **Right-of-way, land acquisition, and relocation assistance** (5 minutes) — This portion should include discussion of the major requirements and procedures for acquiring land and structures and providing relocation assistance. It should also refer to the pamphlets that will be available as handouts.

Handouts — Public hearing handouts should include relevant charts; project maps; a packet of all communications and notifications, including legal notice, newsletter, press release; description of State/Federal relationships; and right-of-way pamphlets.

Displays — These should include an appropriately prepared aerial, developed in accordance with specifications and under our supervision. Corridor displays should use a 200-400-scale base map; design hearing displays should be on a 30-scale map. Use your discretion in requesting any variations from these standards. If slides, computer presentations, etc., are to be used, make sure to supervise their development.

Mechanical and display items — Before leaving for the public hearing, make sure the following are available and in good working order:

- public address system
- tape recorder and tapes
- projection equipment (be sure to take an extra bulb)
- extension cords with double sockets
- microphones, mike stands, and easels
- speaker and attendance lists, handouts, name tags, pencils, scotch tape, masking tape
- directional signs and arrows, signs for outside the building
- display indicating date by which written testimony must be received
- copies of the draft EIS or EA.

All too often, a hearing scenario ran as follows: Agency staff, accompanied by a hearing officer, were seated at a long table high on a stage in a school auditorium looking down on an often unruly audience. A graphic display depicted the project under consideration. The technical people gave the agency presentation and then entertained questions and comments from the audience. One by one, audience members stepped to the microphone to present their thoughts on the proposed project. More often than not, these thoughts were interspersed with vituperations directed at the agency for failing to adequately consider the impact of the proposal and for not allowing public input at a more appropriate point in the project's development. It was quite common for the "interaction" to break down into heated, unproductive debate.

The disadvantages of this format are quite obvious. Principal among them is the fact that the question-and-answer period is of little substantive value. If the attendant public involvement program was comprehensive, a majority, if not all, of the public's questions and comments would have been addressed before the hearing. If the public involvement program was minimal or nonexistent, interaction at the hearing would do little to modify the project proposal. Coming at the end of the development process, the hearing is simply not an appropriate time to incorporate "new" information into the project.

A second drawback of this format is the lack of an opportunity for the public to discuss the project on a one-to-one basis with project team members and/or to inspect the graphic displays during the hearing. This is a particularly serious defect if preceding public involvement activities have not been thorough.

Several agencies that utilize the traditional format have improved its effectiveness by adding the following elements:

- Establishment of time limits for speakers (See page 71).
- Development of specific, well-organized agendas (See page 79).
- Conduct of pre-hearing information sessions (See page 69).
- Scheduling of recesses to allow for more personal interaction between the public and agency personnel (See page 81).

Each of these approaches is discussed in detail in other sections of this book.

"Dual Hearing" Format

Several innovative transportation agencies have totally restructured their public hearing operations. One popular technique is the "dual hearing," in which a highly structured, formal, "official" hearing is complemented by an informal, ongoing, "informational" hearing. This is similar to the "multi-use" meeting (see **Exhibit 1-6).** Specific elements include the following:

- ***Formal Hearing.*** One prong of the dual hearing format involves a very formal situation that includes such elements as registration of speakers, set time limits for speakers, and the receipt of testimony without cross-examination. This session generally takes place in a large auditorium, where the agency gives a formal presentation and a hearing officer accepts public testimony for the record.

There is no provision for questions and answers, and the hearing officer does not engage in debate or discussion other than to correct or clarify a procedural matter. Questions raised at the formal hearing are responded to at the simultaneously conducted informational session and in writing following the hearing. Theoretically, this portion of the hearing can be conducted in the presence of only three people: the hearing officer, the speaker, and the court reporter or recorder.

The agenda of a formal hearing is similar to that of the traditionally conducted hearing. An agency presentation is followed by a short recess, after which the hearing resumes for the receipt of public testimony.

- ***Informal Hearing.*** This portion of the dual hearing involves the "nuts and bolts" interaction between agency and community. It is basically an ongoing discussion conducted in a room or lobby adjacent to the testimony room. Generally beginning one hour before the start of the formal hearing, the informational session enables the public to review documents and exhibits and engage in continuing discussion with agency and consultant staff members. Since none of the discussion becomes part of the official hearing record, the informal hearing is conducive to thorough and honest one-to-one communication in a relaxed atmosphere.

- ***Advantages.*** Agencies that have used the dual-hearing format report the following advantages:

  1. It eliminates the pretense of two-way communication in the testimony room.

  2. It reduces the possibility of a hearing disintegrating into a prolonged debate between members of the public and agency personnel.

  3. It allows the public to inspect graphic materials and technical documents and discuss the project freely without disturbing or interrupting those giving testimony.

WARNING!

Never use a dual-hearing format unless you have conducted a comprehensive public involvement program. The formal and independent status of the recorded portion depends on a solid foundation of meaningful interaction between agency and community. Conducted in isolation, this type of hearing reflects a disinterested and unresponsive attitude on the part of agency officials.

Open Forum Format

The most recent innovation is the open forum public hearing. This type of hearing is similar to the dual hearing: an information session with a written brochure is combined with a greatly reduced formal hearing component. **Exhibit** 2-2 shows a diagram of an open forum public hearing.

- ***Information Session.*** This is a walk-in information session in a large room with staffed displays presenting all the essential information on the project. At the entrance, greeters give attendees a brochure describing the project and orient them to the elements of the open forum public hearing, including the three ways to make formal comments for the transcript:

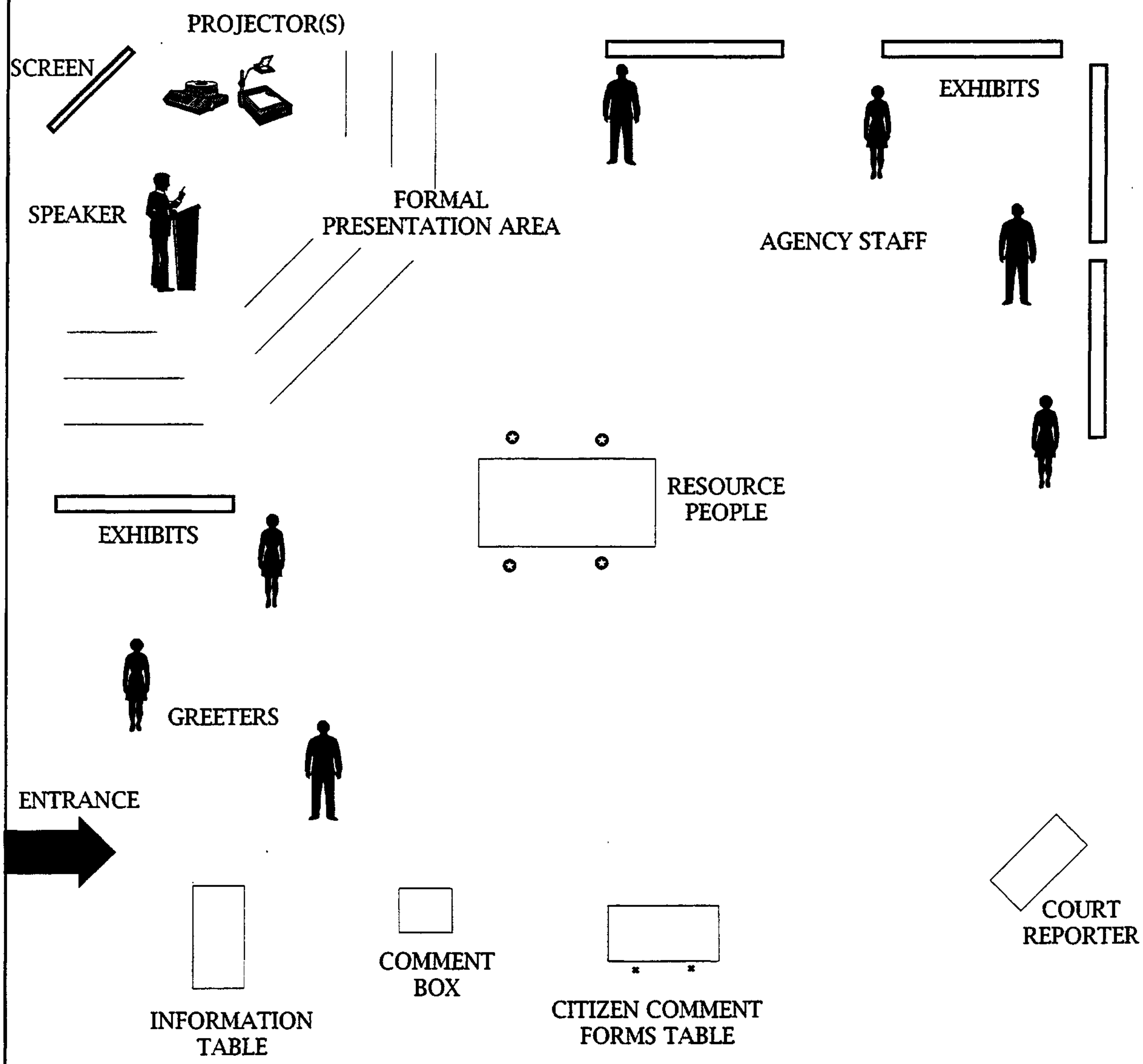
  - to a court reporter or recorder individually;
  - on a comment sheet deposited in comment boxes prominently located in the hearing room; and
  - through written comments mailed in within the comment period.

  Members of the public are free to interact informally with agency staff one-to-one and view the exhibits, which may include a slide show, video presentation, interactive display, or computer simulation. As appropriate, agency specialists such as cultural resource or wetlands specialists are available at tables. There is no formal agency presentation at a set time, and the public may speak to a court reporter or recorder at any time. Consequently, this format has been found to be much more convenient to persons who may not be available in the evening (e.g., shift workers or the elderly) or may not have the time to sit through an agency presentation and numerous public speakers until their turn comes.

  The format also makes commenting easier for people who are uncomfortable speaking before a group. One southern transportation agency with extensive experience using this technique has found that over five times the number of comments are received at open forum hearings as at traditional public hearings. At open forum hearings, an average of 62 percent of attendees commented—compared to 12 percent at traditional hearings.

- ***Formal Hearing Component.*** As mentioned above, the formal hearing component of an open forum public hearing is greatly reduced. No formal agency presentation is made, and persons who wish to make formal comments do so individually to a court reporter or recorder. If a tape recorder is used, it is recommended that an agency official be present to assist the public and dispel any impression of impersonality or disinterest. A few agencies have included presentations at the beginning of the hearing followed by an information session with individually available reporters or recorders. In answer to criticism that the open forum format deprived the public of the opportunity to present its views publicly and hear others' views, one State agency combines the open forum hearing with a more traditional session.

Exhibit 2-2: OPEN FORUM PUBLIC HEARING ARRANGEMENT



> This agency conducts an open forum hearing from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. At 7:00 P.M., what is called the "auditorium session" begins and lasts until 9:00 P.M. The auditorium session is the speakers' part of a traditional hearing in which members of the public who wish to make comments before an audience are called on.

The transcript of an open forum public hearing consists of statements made individually to the court reporters or recorders, supplemented by the brochure, descriptions of the exhibits, and written statements.

Successful use of the open forum public hearing depends on several factors. First, there must be an effective, interactive, early public involvement program. Since the brochure and exhibits take the place of a formal agency presentation, transportation agencies have found that they must spend significant amounts of time developing the brochure. Extensive pre-hearing coordination, including staff meetings among all the offices that will participate in the hearing, helps to prepare agency personnel to give similar answers to all questions. Public notices of open forum hearings should indicate the essentials of the new format so the public is not taken by surprise. State agencies planning to try this innovative technique should consult with a Federal Highway or Transit Administration office as to whether the technique conforms to approved public involvement and public hearing procedures. Finally, most agencies using the open forum hearing format started with a non-controversial project to gain experience.

Information Sessions

Regardless of whether you are opting for a traditional or a more innovative public hearing format, it is always advisable to hold a pre-hearing information session. Although a dual hearing format, in effect, provides for ongoing exchange of information, it is generally good to conduct a separate session several days before the hearing. This gives community members an opportunity to gather any information they may need to prepare their testimony.

In the case of more traditional hearings, information sessions are essential, since they represent the only chance for personal, continuous, and prolonged interaction between agency personnel and community representatives.

A more complete discussion of information sessions is included in **Chapter 1: Meetings.**

B. Graphics

Preparation of hearing graphics should be an ongoing activity throughout the development of a project's public involvement program. Although exhibits based on data included in the environmental document cannot be prepared until shortly before the hearing, other graphics readily lend themselves to incremental development and updating.

For example, a display of alternative alignments can initially be prepared for an early project meeting. As the technical studies progress and as more input is received from the community, some alternatives will be added, some discarded, and some modified. To remain current and suitable for public presentation, the graphic therefore requires amendment on a continuous basis. However, by the time studies have been completed, the graphic should have evolved into a nearly finished product, adequate for display at the hearing.

Although the basic hearing exhibit usually comprises alternative alignments and/or design features, it should not be presented in isolation. Instead, it should be supplemented by schematic drawings, maps, charts, renderings, computer simulations, and other appropriate visuals. Many agencies use artists' renderings, cross-sections, scale models, and comparative charts and graphs to round out their presentations. On the high-tech side, more and more agencies use videotapes, interactive displays, and computer-generated overheads and simulations in their presentations.

In all cases, it is essential that exhibits be in final form by the time of the pre-hearing briefing session so they can be inspected by agency team members and used during the dry run. **Chapter 5: Graphics, Visual Aids, and Electronic Communications** discusses selection, preparation, and display of graphic materials in greater detail.

C. *Procedural aspects*

Most procedural aspects of preparing for and conducting a public hearing should be a matter of agency policy and therefore finalized well in advance of the hearing date. Principal items that must be considered include the following:

- ***Registering Attendees and Speakers.*** As at public meetings, the registration of hearing attendees and speakers is generally accomplished through use of either attendance sheets or registration cards. Specific details on relevant techniques and procedures for registering attendees and speakers can be found **Chapter 1.** Some agencies have preregistered speakers by mail, but this can be a logistical nightmare, so it is not recommended. Instead, most use speakers' lists or cards. The lists can be kept at the greeters' table and periodically brought to the hearing officer. People signing the lists should be told that they will be called upon in the order in which they signed in.

  Although registration or speakers' cards can also be used for sign-up, they probably should be avoided whenever possible. Cards are generally collected and sorted in a random manner that precludes calling on people in the order in which they submitted their speaking requests. Often, this results in charges of bias and an unruly atmosphere.

RELINQUISHING SPEAKING TIME

It is generally advisable to develop a policy regarding registered speakers who wish to relinquish all or part of their speaking time to other designated individuals. To avoid chaos and disruption at the hearing, several agencies include specific guidelines for relinquishing time in their notification documents. One agency requires the following: 1) the person relinquishing time must be present at the hearing; and 2) time may only be ceded to one other person. Many agencies do not allow speakers to cede time.

- ***Setting Time Limits.*** Regardless of the hearing format, it is good to set a limit on the length of time any one person can speak. This helps prevent domination of the proceedings by one or more people and, more importantly, assures that everyone in attendance will be heard. Most agencies report that a five-minute limit is adequate and generally acceptable.

"ADDITIONAL TIME" PROVISIONS

If a specific time limit is established, it is a good idea to develop a policy to deal with people who wish to speak for a ***longer*** *period of time. A number of agencies provide for this by offering additional time at the end of the hearing,* ***after everyone has had an opportunity to be heard.***

- ***Selecting a Hearing Officer.*** Determining whether to use an agency or outside hearing officer is a decision that depends on agency policy and specific project characteristics. Although designating a particular person cannot generally be accomplished until shortly before the hearing, it is usually possible to determine the "type" of appropriate hearing officer well in advance of the hearing date. The range of alternatives includes:

  1. **Agency hearing officer.** Most State transportation agencies select a project team member to serve as hearing officer. The advantage of using a knowledgeable internal staffer can be substantial, particularly if a traditional hearing format is used. (Please see the **"Meeting Conductors" section of Chapter 1, beginning on page** 52.) However, the disadvantages, including the difficulty of finding an *objective* team member, may outweigh the benefits and point to the need to look outside the agency. In making this decision, many factors, including budget, available time, and amount of internal "red tape" should be considered.

  2. **Outside hearing officer.** In selecting an outside person to serve as hearing officer, agencies can either pick a respected community volunteer or hire a person with no ties to either agency or community. The latter approach is generally preferred, since it is usually as difficult to find an

unbiased community representative as it is to find an objective agency staffer. If a traditional format is planned, a community hearing officer has the added disadvantage of being unfamiliar with project details and agency procedures.

On the other hand, several agencies have found that hiring a "professional" hearing officer is very effective—particularly if a dual-hearing format is being planned for a project that is complex and controversial, and/or one in which the agency's credibility is in questioned. It is often reassuring to all concerned to know that the person accepting testimony has no predetermined attitude about either agency or community.

Finding an outside hearing officer can, however, be a difficult and time-consuming task. One agency reports that it taps the following resources:

- *Department of Civil Service.* A list is requested of people who have served as hearing officers in Civil Service mediation cases. This list is composed primarily of professional hearing officers and attorneys.
- *National Labor Relations Board.* The NLRB provides a list of arbitrators used in labor disputes.
- *Law Schools.* Law professors often have both the necessary expertise and the flexible schedule that are a prerequisite to selection.

As a general rule, outside hearing officers are most appropriate for dual-hearing formats in which detailed project knowledge is not required. However, some briefing and review of project materials is always essential. To accomplish this, it is usually a good idea to set up at least two meetings between the hearing officer and agency representatives. Highlights should include a general project briefing, a summary of meetings to date, a discussion of all technical studies, and a review of project impacts and community sentiment.

In addition, the hearing officer should be provided with copies of the following: Draft Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment; Federal guidelines pertaining to public hearings; notification documents, including newspapers and proposed handouts; and agency procedures for conducting public hearings.

RELATED COSTS

Costs for hiring an outside hearing officer can vary greatly and depend, to some degree, on the individual's qualifications and experience. For the most part, costs of outside hearing officers are high and may preclude use of this otherwise excellent alternative for all but very special projects.

3. **Alternative Techniques.** A few agencies have tried using community-selected hearing officers or a team approach in which an agency-community pair co-chairs the hearing. Although either technique could result in an overall lessening of friction by serving as reassurance that the agency is sincere in its efforts to listen to all points of view, there are many potential dangers. Consider, for example, the following questions:

   - Whom does the agency select from the community? Given the number of factions usually associated with a transportation project—some for, some against, most looking out for their own interests—selection of any one individual is a difficult task. In fact, an unpopular choice might add to already-existing tension.

   - How can "neutral" people be found? As previously discussed, this is an ongoing concern involved in the selection of both internal and external hearing officers.

   - If the project involves more than one town, from which town is the hearing officer or co-hearing officer selected? This presents an insoluble problem, since selection of an all-encompassing panel of hearing officers could create an unwieldy and unmanageable situation.

   In spite of the appeal of these innovative approaches, most agencies would caution against their use. The large number of intangibles and potential problems could very probably create a chaotic hearing situation over which the agency would have little control.

FINAL HEARING OFFICER SELECTION TIPS

Regardless of the hearing format, your hearing officer selection process should focus on people who are articulate and effective speakers, objective, able to deal with emotional outbursts in a fair but firm manner, and generally pleasant and calm. If a traditional format is being used, significant interactive skills are also necessary.

- ***Recording the Proceeding.*** Determining a method of recording proceedings is a matter of agency policy. Since Federal guidelines require a verbatim account of all public hearings, most agencies use either a stenographic (court) reporter and/or a tape recorder.

  Court reporters are generally preferred for hearings at which a large turnout is anticipated. Their visibility is a distinct advantage, since the public can actually see the recording of its comments and questions. This often adds to the credibility of the agency's efforts.

  In addition, court reporters simplify an agency's post-hearing efforts by providing transcripts. This is particularly helpful in the case of extended hearings at which a great deal of testimony is received.

The principal disadvantage of a court reporter involves the human element. Volatile, inarticulate, and/or rapid speakers can make it difficult for a reporter to get down everything that is said. Errors during transcription can further distort testimony by omitting key words, sentences, and/or entire passages. As a safeguard, several States use a tape recorder to back up the court reporter. Although this necessitates an additional resource expenditure, the ability to "double-check" your hearing record, if necessary, can be invaluable.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

If you decide to use a court reporter, be sure to contact a stenographic service at least one month before the hearing. A follow-up letter should be sent to confirm all arrangements and serve as a reminder of the day, date, and time of hearing. It is always a good idea to request that the reporter arrive at least a half hour before the start of the hearing. This allows adequate time to set up, give any special instructions, and reassure everyone that the hearing can start on time.

RELATED COSTS

Court reporter rates generally are based on a fee per page and the number of copies of the transcript. In most cases, there is also an attendance fee.

Tape recorders are often used at small hearings or if limited agency resources preclude hiring a court reporter. When using a tape recorder, make sure it is placed in a visible location, so that participants can feel confident that their input is being recorded. If a tape recorder is used as the sole recording technique, always make sure that a backup system is available.

As previously mentioned, it is always good to tape your hearing, even if a court reporter is present. In addition to its possible use to double-check the hearing transcript, a recording can serve as a backup if the court reporter does not arrive or becomes ill during the proceedings. Also, a tape recording has special value in that it catches the flavor of the hearing and can therefore be valuable during follow-up activities or possible litigation.

2. Short-range preparatory activities

Regardless of the thoroughness of your long-range preparatory activities, the six to eight weeks prior to a public hearing are always hectic. Following the completion of project-related technical studies and/or the environmental document, a number of specific tasks must be accomplished, seemingly all at once. The most essential are discussed below:

- ***Selecting a Site.*** An appropriate hearing facility should be selected at least two months before the scheduled hearing date. In fact, most agencies find it helpful to examine a number of tentative sites during the final stages of technical study or environmental document preparation.

  Basic criteria for selecting a hearing site are similar to those that apply to meetings. (Please see **Chapter 1: Meetings.**) If a dual-hearing or open forum format is used, the requirements detailed on **pages 65–69** are particularly appropriate.

- ***Establishing a Date and Time.*** A hearing date and time can be determined as soon as a target date has been set for completion of all technical reports. If an environmental document is being prepared, be sure to factor in review, rewrite, and printing times, as well as the 15-day minimum public availability period for inspection and comment. Once these considerations are made, the decision on when to hold the hearing depends primarily on the State-required notice period, the availability of agency personnel, displays and handouts, and a suitable facility.

In general, guidelines that apply to selecting a meeting date and time also apply to hearings. As always, decisions should be based on specific community characteristics rather than on a boiler-plate formula of absolutes. You might want to check the criteria discussed in **Chapter 1** before finalizing your plans.

SET A CLOSING TIME

To develop a reasonable time frame for your hearing, it is a good idea to announce a closing time in your notification documents. As a general rule, a one-night hearing can comfortably be closed at 10:30 or 11:00 P.M. However, in determining an appropriate time, be sure to consider such factors as degree of project controversy, number of potentially affected people, accessibility of the hearing site, work habits and lifestyles of area residents, and any conflicting meetings.

A. *All-day or Multi-day Hearings*

Sometimes the nature of a project demands that a public hearing run longer than three or four hours. Particularly in the case of a large project that affects several governmental jurisdictions and a large number of people, the hearing can and often should be expanded to a full-day or a multi-day affair.

CASE IN POINT

One eastern state held a five-day, five-night hearing on a controversial interstate section. The hearing, which ran from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., with an hour break for lunch and dinner, was well-attended on an almost continuous basis.

Planning for a multi-day hearing involves an extraordinary amount of foresight and careful preparation. In addition to the customary activities, a variety of time-, energy-, and cost-consuming factors come into play. Consequently, the decision to run an expanded hearing should only be made if the overall public involvement program clearly indicates that a large number of people will choose to actively participate in the hearing.

Once you are convinced that your project warrants a multi-day event, your preparatory activities should give special attention to the following:

1. ***Agency Presentation.*** If your hearing is planned as an all-day-and-evening session, deciding when to give your official agency presentation may create special problems. Although delivering it in the morning, at the start of the session, is obviously essential, it is likely that turnout will be greater in the early evening hours. Some agencies resolve this problem by giving the presentation in the morning and handing out transcripts to "late arrivals." Others give the presentation twice, once at the beginning of the hearing and once again in the early evening. Still others use videotapes for this purpose.

SPECIAL OUTREACH EFFORTS MAY NOT WORK

To reach as many members of the community as possible, one agency offered its official presentation on a continuous basis. Recorded as a slide and impulse tape program, the presentation ran in a room adjoining the hearing room during the entire course of the proceedings. Unfortunately, the resource expenditure was largely wasted, since few people took the time to sit through the program. It might have worked better if the slide tape had been put in the lobby as a continuously running kiosk. The important point is that special efforts need to be well-integrated with other features of a meeting or hearing.

2. ***Administrative Aspects.*** When a multi-day hearing is being planned, it may be necessary to house your project team near the hearing site. This requires extra funds for lodging and per diem, as well as added paperwork that should be taken care of well in advance of the hearing dates.

   - **Preparing and distributing notification documents.** In addition to the required legal notice, hearing notification documents can include any and all techniques described in the **Chapter 1: Meetings** and **Chapter 3: Notifi-**

cation Techniques. To avoid redundancy, this section focuses only on those pieces of information that are unique to public hearings and that must be incorporated into an agency's hearing advertisement campaign. These may be listed without elaboration:

- date, place, time, and purpose of pre-hearing information session;
- purpose and format of the public hearing;
- an explanation of the procedures for registering to speak;
- time limits, if any, for speaking.;
- a description of the procedures for submitting written testimony and/or exhibits and time limits involved;
- a statement indicating that all maps, drawings, and other pertinent information will be available for public inspection at the hearing, together with appropriate right-of-way literature;
- a description of the formal presentation and its estimated length; and
- a statement indicating the availability of a Draft EIS or Environmental Assessment (if appropriate); the locations for reviewing these documents; the length of time they will be available for review; the address to which written comments may be sent; and the cutoff date for written comments.

- **Preparing the agency presentation.** Developing a public hearing presentation is a time-consuming task that should begin at least four weeks prior to the scheduled hearing date. The sequence of preliminary activities closely follows the schedule detailed in **Chapter 1: Meetings** (please see **pages 36–40).** Of particular concern during the early stages is deciding the style of presentation. As discussed elsewhere in this guidebook, the three principal options are:

1. reading a prepared and edited text;
2. giving an extemporaneous speech; or
3. recording a prepared text and presenting it in the form of a slide or videotape program.

If a "live" presentation is to be given, it is important to decide who will deliver the material. Traditionally, members of the agency project team have delivered the presentation, each one focusing on his/her particular area of expertise. Thus, the planner/design engineer discussed the alternatives under consideration; the environmental person addressed the potential impacts; the right-of-way representative explained the acquisition and relocation procedures; and the hearing officer discussed the role of the public hearing in project development.

Recently, however, a number of States have opted for the continuity and consistency that comes from delivery of the entire presentation by one person. Whenever possible, a member of the public involvement staff gives the presentation, in the form of a prepared, edited text. This approach is particularly well-suited to the dual-hearing format, since it permits other project team members to stay in the display and information area to address specific community comments and questions.

Regardless of the particular style, there appears to be uniform agreement that the agency presentation must be kept as short as possible. With the advent of comprehensive and ongoing public involvement programs, the past practice of delivering one- or two-hour hearing presentations has become unnecessary and undesirable. Instead, most agencies recommend that the official presentation be limited to one half-hour. A suggested corridor public hearing presentation format is presented in **Exhibit 2-3.**

There are a number of ways to reduce the length of the official presentation. Principal among them are the following:

1. ***delivering a prepared text;***

2. ***distributing an all-encompassing handout packet*** that eliminates the need to cover each and every basic detail in the oral presentation. For example, the right-of-way portion in **Exhibit 2-3** can be reduced to five minutes if appropriate relocation and acquisition brochures are distributed as supplementary materials. Also, an explanation of the Federal-State funding relationship is not needed if literature on this topic is available at the hearing. And finally, a detailed description of each alternative becomes unnecessary if handouts include clear, easily understandable project maps that are used in conjunction with an aerial mosaic referred to during the presentation; and

3. ***discouraging documents and questions from the audience*** while the presentation is being given. This point can be emphasized by the hearing officer during opening remarks. People should be reminded that questions and statements will be entertained either during the question-and-answer period (traditional format) or in the display and information area (dual format).

- **Conducting a Pre-Hearing Briefing.** Project team members should get together one or two weeks prior to the information session to fully define their responsibilities and discuss final preparation. By this time, all graphic displays should be completed and ready for final inspection.

  The pre-hearing briefing should focus on the agency presentation—particularly on determining that each component is properly integrated. A dry run of the presentation helps work out any "bugs" and is especially helpful if more than one person is to deliver the talk.

  Before the briefing breaks up, team members should double-check to make sure that arrangements have been made to transport the following items to the information session and/or hearing:

  - graphic displays;
  - handouts;
  - easels;
  - recording equipment;

Exhibit 2-3: SAMPLE PUBLIC HEARING PRESENTATION FORMAT

1. Introductory remarks (10 minutes)
   a. Welcome
   b. Role of hearing in project development
   c. Need for proposed facility
   d. Project history
   e. Procedures for giving testimony and submitting written statements
2. Presentation of alternatives (5 minutes)
3. Discussion of social, economic and environmental impacts (10 minutes)
4. Right-of-way (5 minutes)
   a. Right-of-way requirements of alternatives
   b. Relocation assistance program
   c. Acquisition procedures

- public address system (if not provided by the facility being used);
- microphone and mike stands;
- speakers' and attendance sheets or registration cards;
- audiovisual equipment for presentations (slide or overhead projector, video equipment, computers for simulations, etc.), plus the slides, videotapes, or computer disks (if appropriate);
- name tags;
- pencils;
- tapes;
- copies of environmental documents;
- directional signs (arrows pointing the way to the hearing room, etc.); and
- informational signs (e.g., signs indicating when and to whom written statements may be submitted).

HEARING CONDUCT

As with all aspects of community involvement, *preparation* is the pivotal element of successful public hearing conduct. In theory, a dual-hearing format is easier to conduct than one based on the traditional format. By providing for limited interaction between hearing officer and audience, it generally permits the hearing to proceed in an orderly manner and with a minimum of disruption.

However, even the best-planned hearing is vulnerable to protest and unruly participants. An obstreperous speaker who refuses to relinquish the microphone or abide by set time limits, a person who demands on-the-spot answers, or an organized opposition that attempts to dominate the proceedings all present a challenge to the hearing officer. Consequently, it is imperative that hearing officers be poised, flexible, objective, and skilled in all aspects of interactive communications. (See **pages 54–55.**)

To avoid rehashing the basic aspects of effective hearing conduct that are explored in other parts of this guidebook, this section highlights only key points important enough to warrant re-emphasis. These include the following:

1. Introductory remarks

The opening moments of a presentation should be used to clearly describe the purpose of the hearing and spell out guidelines and procedures that govern its conduct. Introductory remarks should include a discussion of the hearing's role in the decision-making process, a description of procedures for registering to speak and for submitting testimony, and a reiteration of regulations regarding time limits, order of speaking, etc. In general, it is a good idea to periodically review guidelines during the course of the hearing for the benefit of latecomers and other people absent from the hearing room at the time of the original announcement.

2. Recesses

Recesses provide an excellent means of breaking up the formality of a hearing. A 10-15 minute recess should be called immediately after the agency presentation, so participants can review exhibits, register to speak, and informally ask questions of the hearing officer and agency representatives. An extended hearing should include scheduled recesses at periodic intervals.

Recesses can also be used to diffuse a potentially volatile situation. It is sometimes good to temporarily suspend proceedings if a difficult individual or group threatens to disrupt the hearing. One-to-one conversation during a break can often resolve a problem or suggest a framework within which it can be handled at a later date.

3. Written statements

Although it is not a Federal requirement, many agencies choose to read into the hearing record the contents of any written statements received prior to the hearing date. The most sensible time to perform this activity is immediately following the recess—just prior to calling on the first community speaker.

4. *Use of microphones*

Microphones are a necessity at public hearings, both for amplification and for recording. Most agencies use one of three standard arrangements: one omni-directional microphone, one or more hand-held microphones, or one or more floor microphones in combination with one or more table microphones.

The latter approach is usually preferred because it facilitates recording everything that is said and lends itself to orderly, systematic proceedings. Omni-directional microphones have the disadvantage of picking up incidental conversation and are more suited to roundtable discussions. Hand-held mikes can be distracting and tend to add confusion to the hearing setting.

HEARING FOLLOW-UP

Many people refer to the public hearing as the final step in the public involvement process. Unfortunately, a public involvement program that terminates with a corridor or design hearing falls short of meeting its mandate. In reality, a hearing should be regarded as a major control point—the termination of one phase of activities and the beginning of another.

An effective public involvement program requires that hearing input be considered in finalizing project decisions and that community outreach extend throughout the construction phase of a project. At a minimum, agencies should be prepared to follow up a hearing by performing the following tasks:

- sending brief form letters or cards to all attendees thanking them for participating;
- updating the project mailing list by entering the names of participating individuals and organizations who signed attendance sheets;
- sending letters of appreciation to the person(s) who provided the hearing and information center site(s);
- preparing a hearing transcript if the proceedings were tape-recorded;
- reviewing the hearing transcript prepared by a court reporter for form and content. Copies should then be distributed to appropriate State and Federal offices;
- analyzing the hearing transcript to extract suggestions, criticisms, and questions that require follow-up;
- scheduling an in-house meeting to consider all reasonable input received at the hearing;
- responding in writing to all questions raised at the hearing. The disposition of suggestions and recommendations made at the hearing should be conveyed in writing as well;
- monitoring payment of all hearing-related bills, including those for stenographic services, newspaper ads, and facility rental.

Chapter 3. NOTIFICATION TECHNIQUES

The care with which you develop the various components of a public meeting/hearing presentation should be paralleled by a carefully conceived program of notification techniques. Since the goal of notification is to attract a cross-section of the communities interested in and/or potentially affected by the plan or project under consideration, it is important to select communication techniques that appropriately suit the situation. Consider, for instance, the following:

- A technique that will work in one community may be totally ineffective in another. Posters, particularly the "wanted" type, have proven quite effective in attracting people to meetings in sparsely populated, rural areas. Their usefulness in a teeming urban area, however, is negligible. On the other hand, saturation of an urban area with handbills or fliers is an effective means of reaching a majority of potentially affected residents. A similar approach in a rural setting would represent an unnecessary effort.

- Some public meetings are held once on a specific issue, while others are held on a regular basis. Newsletters are good for tieing aspects of a plan or project together and, hence, are effective if used periodically throughout a series of meetings; however, they usually are neither time- nor cost-efficient if used to address an isolated issue.

- A simpler, more direct approach such as the use of letters of invitation, in combination with news releases would be much more appropriate for a meeting on a specific matter.

- Some plans or projects cover a large area encompassing many people, while others affect only a handful of residents. A paid ad might be appropriate to announce a meeting/hearing on a plan or project covering a large area but would be overkill and an unnecessary expenditure of resources in the latter case.

The point in the transportation planning or project development process at which a meeting is to be held has a bearing on the notification techniques to be used. A meeting held at the outset would not demand the attention to detail and technical data that a meeting held at the completion of the process would; hence, a less than full-blown effort would be required for the introductory meeting. Here we are interested in informing the public of the project's existence and of a meeting that will be used to discuss the scope and objectives of the attendant studies. A basic letter of invitation and a press release might suffice. Prior to a later meeting, we probably will want to include in the notifications a breakdown of the findings of the studies to date; results of previous meetings; and the schedule or work program that the agency will follow in completing the plan or project. Given the proper resources, a newsletter and/or paid ad would be used to accommodate the volume of information.

The above examples are only a handful of the situations faced by transportation agency personnel when preparing for meetings and hearings. The point is that there is no blanket rule for notifying the public. An agency must examine each situation before determining the most appropriate way(s) of reaching a given segment of the public.

Ideally, perhaps, an agency should use every notification technique at its disposal in combination to ensure that every interested, concerned, and affected citizen is aware of a meeting or hearing; however, this is an unrealistic approach, since all agencies are constrained by time, people power, and financial limitations.

In any case, selecting the right kind of notification techniques is only part of the battle. Equally as important, the techniques used must reflect a thorough, accurate, and imaginative effort on the part of an agency if they are to 1) catch the public's attention and 2) encourage people to attend the meeting or hearing. Too often, perhaps, agencies become concerned only with "churning out" a specific number or volume of notifications and lose sight of the style, format, and even content of the material. Such a tendency is dangerous. Worse than failing to attract people to meetings/hearings, it can alienate those who see a less-than-total notification effort as an attempt to discourage and confuse the public.

For the purpose of presenting and discussing notification techniques in an orderly fashion, the following outline has been developed:

- Mass media notices
  - Newspapers
    - Press releases
    - Public (formal) notices
    - Paid advertisements
  - Radio and television

- Direct mailings
  - Mailing lists
  - Letters of invitation
  - Newsletters
  - Fliers

- Other
  - Posters
  - Drop-in centers and field offices (trailers)
  - On-line services
  - Telephone hotlines
  - Interactive displays and kiosks
  - 800 numbers

MASS MEDIA NOTICES

Notification through the mass media has the unique characteristic of being able to reach and encourage larger, less specific communities of people to participate in planning and development; hence, although this category of notification procedures is usually used for all projects, it is especially valuable for those with a widespread impact or interest, such as a large-scale corridor or project development study or a metropolitan transportation planning process.

Advantages

- Mass media notifications reach the widest possible audience.
- From an agency standpoint, most are relatively time-efficient.
- They represent a diversity of forms and formats with which to communicate information.
- They allow flexibility in terms of when and how many times information may be released to the public.

Disadvantages

- Public (formal) notices and, in particular, paid ads can be costly.
- Circulation (or listening area) may not coincide with the project or plan area.

Meeting and hearing notices in the mass media are most effective if they are part of an overall media strategy. A typical strategy might include media briefings at the start and at key milestones; press releases; making project information, maps, and photographs easily available to print and electronic media; and informal liaison with interested reporters. Then when the time comes for notices for meetings or hearings, they are much more likely to capture media attention. This helps notify potential attendees, may result in free coverage to supplement paid ads, and often results in coverage of the event itself.

1. PRINT MEDIA/NEWSPAPERS

A. *Press releases*

Press releases can be used throughout the transportation planning or project development process to maintain ongoing communication with both the media and the public. They are particularly effective in conveying announcements that need immediate coverage, such as the scheduling of a public meeting or hearing.

It is usually good to issue press releases prior to all meetings and hearings. They can usually be written in a short period of time; there are no costs involved; and in cases of transportation-related releases, newspapers are very receptive. Local and weekly papers take particular interest in transportation projects and are a good means of advertising meetings.

Generally speaking, a press release should stimulate enough interest and/or curiosity on the part of newspapers so that the latter will follow up and elaborate on a specific piece of news. Usually, the follow-up is in the form of a phone call to the agency. A press release, then, need not contain the large amount of text that, for the most part, characterizes public notices and paid ads. Only basic facts relating directly to the meeting or hearing need be included. Any and all details, whether of the meeting or hearing in particular or the project in general, can be communicated to the papers if and when they follow up on the release.

To ensure maximum effectiveness of a press release, adhere to the following:

- ***Be brief and concise.*** Remember, unlike public notices and paid ads, press releases are not paid for by the agency; hence, they are edited and disposed of in whatever way the newspapers see fit. A wordy, lengthy release can just as easily be ignored by an overworked reporter as it can be developed into an informative, interesting article. In any case, make sure major points are placed in the first few paragraphs and/or highlighted. (See below.)

- ***Include the name and phone number of an agency contact person.*** This point cannot be overemphasized. The newspapers must know whom to call for information. There are few things more frustrating than trying to get information from an agency—any governmental agency—and not being able to get a hold of the "right" person.

- ***Limit the use of jargon.*** Both technical and legal wording can discourage the media as well as the public. Since there are no Federal guidelines on press releases, there is no need to use the "legal-ese" that dots public notices. Technical terms should, when possible, be translated into lay language.

- ***Saturate the project area.*** It never hurts to issue releases to as many newspapers as possible—even those on the periphery of the area—to ensure thorough coverage.

- If possible, ***a map of the project area should accompany the release.*** The purpose of placing a map in a newspaper is merely to give the public a general idea of the project's location and limits; thus, specific details need not and should not be shown.

When writing a press release, keep in mind the following basic principles relating to structure and format:

1) ***The name, telephone number, and fax number of an agency contact person should appear at the top*** of the press release; for example:

Contact: Heidi Smith
(202) 555-0469; FAX (202) 555-0470

2) ***A brief headline should capture the essence of the event;*** for example:

DOT Holds Public Hearing on Proposed Roadway

3) ***The first paragraph should focus on the thrust of the release.*** Keep in mind the journalist's key questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? The point of the following lead paragraph is to convey that a meeting or hearing will be held on a specific issue at a specific date, time, and place.

The Department of Transportation has announced that a public meeting will be held to discuss proposed construction of a new freeway in the Buffalo Valley. The meeting will be held at Johnson Elementary School, 12 Elmwood Drive, Clarksville, on Friday, August 9, 1996, at 7:30 P.M.

4) ***The second paragraph should briefly describe the proposal.*** For example:

   The proposed roadway would be a six-lane, limited-access facility extending from Route 3 just east of Clarksville to Interstate 119, a distance of 5.5 miles.

5) The press release should briefly ***mention the specific topic of discussion*** (e.g., environmental studies, long-range planning process, etc.). This can be done in the third paragraph:

   The results of the technical studies being conducted in conjunction with preparation of the environmental impact statement will be reviewed. The public will be invited to comment on and ask questions about the studies.

   (Note: Although much more could be written about the technical studies, the above suffices. This is just the kind of information that newspapers would want to follow up and develop further.)

TIMING

Timing is as important as style and content. Articles on meetings and hearings should appear in newspapers one week before the event. The exact date that they appear, however, cannot often be controlled by the agency; hence, it is a good idea to issue a release at least two weeks in advance of the meeting or hearing. This usually provides adequate time for the papers to follow up on the release and develop appropriate stories. Weekly or monthly papers usually have strict deadlines for receipt of material to be included in a given edition. These deadlines should be determined well in advance and adhered to.

TRY TEAMWORK

Most agencies have a public relations or information office responsible for preparing press releases and issuing them to the appropriate newspapers. Many States, however, find it helpful to have a draft press release prepared jointly by members of the agency project team. Having individuals more closely associated with the technical elements of a project prepare a draft release helps ensure that the more substantive and important information will be accurately communicated. An individual from the public relations or information office who is perhaps more proficient in writing and editing reviews the draft for form and content before sending it out. (Note: This approach can and should be used in preparing other types of notifications as well.)

Exhibit 3-1 shows a sample press release that is formatted well and conveys the pertinent information concisely and clearly.

B. Public (formal) notices

Public or formal notices have been the traditional notification technique employed by a majority of State transportation agencies. They are used in accordance with Federal Highway and Transit Administrations regulations requiring public notification of a scheduled public hearing, an opportunity for a hearing, or the agency's intent to proceed with construction after having received Federal approval to do so. At a minimum, a public notice includes the following:

- an explanation of procedures for requesting a hearing, including the deadline for submission of a request;
- date, time, and place of the hearing and a description of the project proposal;
- an indication that maps, drawings, and other pertinent information including written views will be available for public inspection and copying at the nearest State agency office or at some other convenient location in the vicinity of the project;
- for design and corridor/design hearings, an indication that tentative schedules for right-of-way acquisition and construction will be discussed;
- an indication that relocation assistance programs will be discussed at the hearing; and
- a description of the procedure for submitting written statements and exhibits at or after the hearing.

For the most part, standard formal notices do little more than meet Federal requirements; they are basically the bone without any meat and are consequently a fairly ineffective notification technique. Why is this so? While part of the problem is a stereotyped notion of the style and content of formal notices that has evolved over the years, another limitation is that many agencies—either out of financial necessity or tradition—place formal notices in the *classified* section of newspapers. In actuality, few people give time or effort to reading through the myriad of notices in the classifieds every day. Those who do are just as likely to inadvertently skip over a notice of a hearing that may interest them as they are to have it catch their eye. The reason: Small print size—a very important negative factor.

Exhibit 3-1: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

INFORMATION RELEASE

Office of the Director

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 2261, Little Rock, Arkansas   Telephone: (501) 569-2000

September 29, 19__   Contact: Ms. Sarah Smith, ext. 999

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR SPRING RIVER BRIDGE

WILLIFORD — The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department will hold a public hearing in the Williford High School Auditorium, Williford, Arkansas, on Tuesday, October 11, at 7:00 P.M., to discuss the proposed location and design of the Spring River Bridge and Approaches on Highway 58 at Williford in Sharp County.

The proposed project generally consists of construction of a new bridge approximately 800 feet upstream from the existing bridge and approximately 0.66 miles of paved roadway approaches to meet the new bridge site.

Plans, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and other pertinent information developed by the Department relative to the proposed project, as well as written statements from interested persons, agencies, or groups, are available for public inspection and copying at the office of the District Engineer, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, Highway 167 South, Batesville, AR.

Persons wishing to submit written statements and other exhibits in place of, or in addition to, oral statements at the public hearing may submit them at the hearing or mail them to the District Engineer, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, P.O. Box 2376, Batesville, AR 72501. Such submissions must be received no later than ten days after the public hearing.

All interested persons will be heard at the public hearing. The State's relocation assistance program, tentative right-of-way acquisition, and construction schedules will be discussed during the public hearing procedures.

— END —

AN EXCEPTION

As is sometimes the case, there is at least one exception to this rule. One Middle Atlantic State has found that, despite lack of visibility, standard formal notices have become more effective than paid ads simply because people are used to looking for them in the classifieds. Ironically, this State ends up paying nearly as much for a three-column formal ad with a map in one daily as it would pay for a quarter-page paid ad.

The fact is that formal notices do not *have* to appear in the classifieds. As mentioned above, they are usually placed there out of tradition or because it is cheaper than another section of the paper. (Note: Formal notices must be paid for by the agency to ensure inclusion in the paper of all pertinent and required information.) Yet, as long as they are consistent with Federal regulations, they can appear anywhere. Given the proper resources and a willingness to break with tradition, an agency can improve the effectiveness of a formal notice by placing it in another part of the paper and expanding upon the format—in effect, transforming it into a paid ad (see **Section 3 of this chapter.**) This not only gives the notice greater visibility; it also gives the agency much more latitude in creating a notice with eye appeal.

Exhibit 3-2 offers an example of a formal notice presented in a paid ad format. It has the following positive features: 1) thorough, comprehensive, informative text; 2) telephone numbers and addresses to be used by people with questions and/or statements to be submitted; and 3) a clear map of the project area.

If financial limitations preclude your agency from using a paid ad for all but a select group of projects, a few things should be kept in mind when preparing a formal notice. First and foremost, ***never rely on a notice as the sole means of notification.*** It is usually too ineffective to stand by itself. Always supplement your notice with other techniques. Second, ***experiment with the style and content of a notice.*** Just as tradition has played a part in keeping notices hidden in the classifieds, it has played a part in the use of stilted, time-worn phraseology. Nowhere in the Federal regulations does it say that legal, technical jargon must be used. Be a bit creative. Add a new twist now and then. And finally, some States find they can make their notices more interesting by including the following pertinent project-, plan-, or meeting-related information:

- a schedule of pre-hearing information centers;
- a statement mentioning that an official agency presentation will be given and indicating how long it is expected to last;
- a statement that all testimony will be recorded (by court stenographer or tape recorder) and will become part of the hearing record;

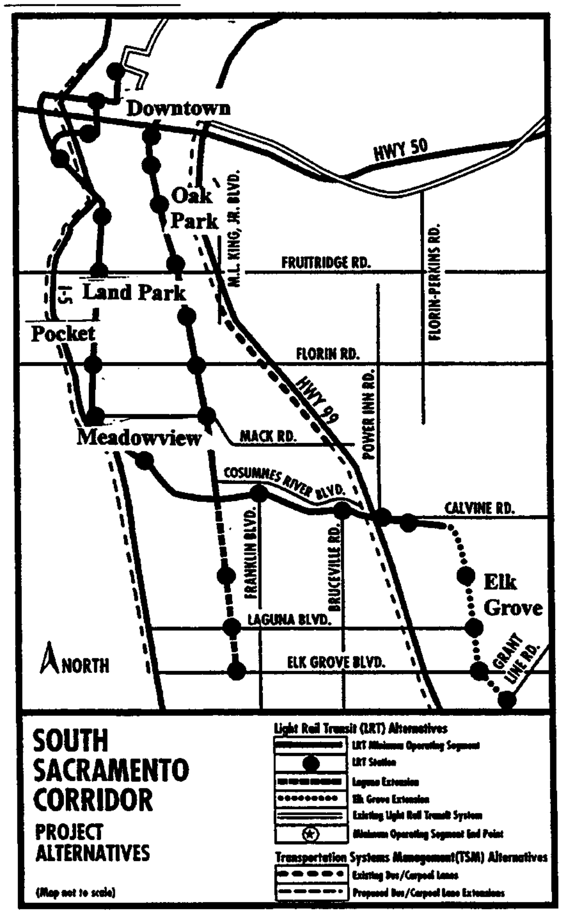
Exhibit 3-2: SAMPLE PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE IN AD FORMAT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

South Sacramento Corridor Alternatives Analysis/DEIS/DEIR

Description and Location: The Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the evaluation of several transit alternatives to serve the South Sacramento area, including expanded bus services or light rail transit (LRT) alternatives along either the Old Southern Pacific Railroad or the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way between downtown Sacramento and the South Sacramento communities. The DEIS/DEIR evaluates these transit alternatives for their ridership potential, costs, beneficial and adverse environmental impacts, financial feasibility, and political support in the affected communities.

Availability of DEIS/DEIR: The DEIS/DEIR will be available for public review beginning September 30, 19_, at RT's Administrative Offices at 1400 29th Street, Sacramento, CA, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. Copies also will be available for public review at the following public libraries:



Downtown Central Library
828 "I" Street
Sacramento, Ca

Colonial Heights Community Library
4799 Stockton Boulevard
Sacramento, CA

Belle Cooledge Community Library
5600 South Land Park Drive
Sacramento, CA

F.K. McClatchy Branch Library
8962 Elk Grove Boulevard
Elk Grove, CA

Martin Luther King Regional Library
7340 24th Street Bypass
Sacramento, CA

McKinley Branch Library
601 Alhambra Boulevard
Sacramento, CA

Southgate Community Library
6132 66th Avenue
Sacramento, CA

A MOVING ISSUE In South Sacramento

Public Comment Period: September 30 through November 14, 19_. Written comments may be submitted to: Debra Jones, Senior Planner/Project Manager, at P.O. Box 2110, Sacramento, CA 95812-2110 no later than 5:00 P.M., Monday, November 14, 19_. For further information, contact Debra Jones at (916) 321-2862.

Date and Time of Public Hearing and Meetings: The RT Board of Directors will be available to hear comments on the DEIS/DEIR on Monday, October 24, 19_, at 6:30 P.M., at Luther Burbank High School Cafeteria, 3500 Florin Road, Sacramento, CA 95823.

- a description of the hearing format, particularly if it varies significantly from the traditional approach;
- agency personnel who will attend; and
- name, telephone number, FAX number, and address of an individual at the agency who may be contacted for information.

Exhibit 3-3 illustrates many of these points.

If non-English-speaking groups are among the people affected by a transportation project, special efforts should be made to solicit maximum participation from these groups. An agency can produce bilingual notices or issue a bilingual press release concurrently with the formal notice. If there is no one within the agency to translate, you might contact the editor of a foreign-language newspaper or a teacher of a foreign language in a nearby school.

This type of bilingual notification should, of course, be followed up by having a translator available at the hearing. It is not much use to attract non-English-speaking people to a public hearing if they can neither understand what is going on nor communicate their thoughts to someone who can understand them.

C. *Paid advertisements*

Some State transportation agencies use paid ads in local and regional newspapers. Paid ads have the advantage of widespread circulation that is one of the formal notice's major pluses without any of the latter's disadvantages. In addition to enabling notification on a widespread basis, they offer the opportunity to develop eye-catching and comprehensive copy that can be placed in a prominent section of the newspaper.

While the paid ad represents one of the most effective means of notifying the public of a meeting or hearing, it can also be the most expensive and, hence, is usually used sparingly. Unless an agency has a substantial public involvement budget, paid ads are reserved for only the most significant and/or controversial transportation projects.

In deciding whether or not to use a paid ad, initially consider the following:

1. ***The contemplated audience.*** Is there a high rate of illiteracy in the project area? Is there low newspaper readership in the area? If the answer to these questions is yes, it would obviously not pay to use a paid ad. Remember that, in many communities, television and radio have taken precedence over newspapers as the prime media for communicating. A quick check of newspaper sales can give a clue to readership in an area. For any given area, you might also compare the number of papers in existence today with the number in existence 5-10 years ago.

Exhibit 3-3: SAMPLE PUBLIC NOTICE

ROUTE 169—PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the New Jersey Department of Transportation will hold a corridor public hearing on Tuesday, June 15, in the courtroom of the Bayonne Municipal Building, 630 Avenue C, Bayonne, for proposed improvement of Route 169 North from the Bayonne Bridge to the vicinity of Communipaw Avenue in Jersey City. The hearing will run from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and from 7:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.

The purpose of the hearing, as described in the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Action Plan (adopted April 14, 1975), is "to ensure that an opportunity is afforded for effective participation by persons interested in the process of determining the need for and location of the proposed improvement" and to provide "a public forum for presenting views on each of the proposed alternative highway locations and the social, economic, and environmental effects of those alternate locations."

The hearing will be preceded by two environmental information sessions, to be held May 9 at the Bayonne Library, 697 Avenue C (corner of 31st Street), Bayonne, and May 10 at the Jersey City City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City.

Each environmental session will be open from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. for the purpose of discussing the potential social, environmental, and economic impacts of the proposed project and all other data contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Maps and renderings will be available for public inspection and comment.

The hearing itself will consist of an official presentation by Department of Transportation personnel, followed by an opportunity for citizens to give testimony regarding the proposed improvement. All testimony will be recorded and become part of the official public hearing record. Questions posed as part of an individual's recorded statement will be officially addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. In addition, a display and information area that will run concurrent with the hearing will provide an opportunity for individuals to pose questions and discuss issues related to the hearing. These informal conversations will not be recorded and will not become part of the official hearing record. Department personnel will be available in the information area beginning at 9:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. on the day of the hearing.

To facilitate the presentation of testimony and accommodate all persons who wish to speak, we ask speakers to sign up upon arriving at the hearing. They will be called upon in the order in which they signed in. Speakers who wish to give their time to one other speaker may do so if they are present at the hearing when their name is called.

Written statements and other exhibits related to the Route 169 project may be presented in place of or in addition to oral statements made at the hearing. These statements and exhibits must be submitted to the Department of Transportation's Office of Public Involvement by July 15 (30 days after the close of the hearing). Persons interested in reviewing the hearing transcript may arrange to see and/or copy it at Department Headquarters in Trenton. In addition, any individual or group wishing to contact the office during the Department's evaluation period is invited to do so in writing or by calling (609) 555-5555.

The Route 169 hearing is being conducted in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Transportation Action Plan. In conformance with the provisions of that plan,

Exhibit 3-3, continued

all maps, drawings, and relevant data related to the engineering, traffic, environmental, and relocation assistance aspects of the project will be available for public inspection at the hearing. A full description of the project will be given during the Department's official presentation at 10:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M.

In the event that the Route 169 project involves the acquisition of land owned by a municipality for public use, the provisions of New Jersey Statutes Annotated, Title 27:7-23 will be observed and considered in the conduct of this hearing.

In accordance with the Action Plan and the requirements of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Statement concerning the effects of the various alternatives has been prepared. This statement is available for public inspection and review at the following locations:

- the New Jersey Department of Transportation Library, Room 130, 1035 Parkway Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey 08625;
- the New Jersey State Clearinghouse, 329 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey;
- the Federal Highway Administration Division Office, 25 Scotch Road, Trenton, New Jersey;
- the Federal Highway Administration Regional Office, 4 Normanskill Boulevard, Delmar, New York;
- the Hudson County Administration Office, Newark Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey 07306;
- the Bayonne Municipal Building, 630 Avenue C, Bayonne, New Jersey;
- the Jersey City City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, New Jersey 07302;
- the Bayonne Public Library, Main Branch, 697 Avenue C, Bayonne, New Jersey 07002; and
- the Jersey City Public Library Main Branch, 472 Jersey Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey 07302.

Copies will also be available for review at the public hearing and the environmental information sessions.

Persons wishing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement may do so by writing, before July 25 (30 days after the hearing) to: Mr. John Smith, Director of Division of Economic and Environmental Analysis, New Jersey Department of Transportation, 1035 Parkway Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

Signed: Jane Q. Doe
Secretary

Another socio-cultural factor that should be considered is the percentage of non-English-speaking people in the area. Does the percentage warrant a bilingual advertisement or an ad in an ethnic newspaper? If so, does your agency have the capability to produce a bilingual ad?

2. ***The size of the project area.*** Ordinarily, a paid ad is used only for those larger projects or planning efforts located in well-populated areas or having potentially significant secondary impacts on a variety of communities. In both cases, it is not possible to identify or contact through direct mailings all of the individuals, families, and businesses that might be affected; hence, a mass media campaign highlighted by a paid ad becomes quite effective. A relatively small project and/or one in which most or all of the potentially affected citizenry can be notified individually does not usually lend itself to the use of a paid ad. The paid ad is simply not labor and/or cost effective for most of the smaller projects and, thus, is not a reasonable approach.

3. ***Your budget.*** This, of course, is the most important factor. As mentioned above, the cost of paid ads usually precludes their use in all but large and/or controversial projects. (Of course, this depends on the size of your ad, how many you use, etc.) There is one exception: You may find that many local and/or weekly newspapers are quite inexpensive; in fact, these papers are often excited about grabbing anything that will fill their pages, especially an ad on a transportation project with significant ramifications!

   The size of your ads has a bearing on both the cost and the number of papers in which you place them. Do not fall into the trap of believing that a paid ad is only effective if it is half- or full-page in size. Remember, newspapers vary in size, too, and some consideration should be given to the ratio of the ad to the overall page size. Thus, given a limited budget, you may want to use four ⅛-page ads rather than one ½-page ad.

4. ***The number of newspapers in the project area.*** This factor is closely tied to your budget. If a number of popular newspapers exist in and around the planning or project area, you face the problem of deciding if it would be worthwhile placing the ad in any one paper. Keeping in mind your budget, get an idea of the cost of placing various sized ads in each newspaper. But cost is only part of the problem here. Which paper does your intended audience prefer? It is one thing to determine which papers have the largest circulation but quite another to determine which are read by a specific community of people. This problem is probably best resolved via agency intuition or "gut" reaction as to which seem to reach a majority of the populace under consideration.

5. ***Your staff.*** It is very important that a paid ad reflect a professional effort. There is a great need for good writing, layout, and graphics. You should be cautioned against opting for a paid ad unless the text and maps can be effectively prepared by specifically designated members within a given period of time. Desktop publishing software is an effective aid in producing professional-looking results.

TIMING

If your paid ad is taking the place of a formal notice, you must adhere to Federal regulations and have it published at least 15 days before the public hearing. If your paid ad is publicizing a meeting, it should appear no later than 7—and preferably 10—days before the event.

Preparation. Depending on the schedule you have developed (see below), allow one full work-month for preparing a paid advertisement from concept to finished product. In addition, submit the ad to the newspapers at least five working days prior to the day you would like it to appear. To be safe, always check with the individual papers during preparatory stages to get an idea of the time frames they follow.

Once you have opted for a paid ad, try to develop a schedule for completing and delivering each component task. This schedule should include the following:

1. ***Select newspaper(s) for publication.***

2. ***Determine size and format of ad.*** Remember, the purpose of a paid ad is to take advantage of its potential eye appeal and to be able to fully elaborate on the nature and purpose of the meeting or hearing, the proposal, and the attendant studies. The format you use determines its success or failure.

3. ***Develop text.*** The following general guidelines are recommended for developing your paid ad:

   - Use a large, bold, eye-catching heading.

   - Use short paragraphs.

   - Break up the text, where appropriate, with subheadings that attract the reader to important and significant pieces of information.

   - Avoid legal or technical jargon.

   - If the paid ad is acting as a formal notice, make sure it is consistent with Federal regulations.

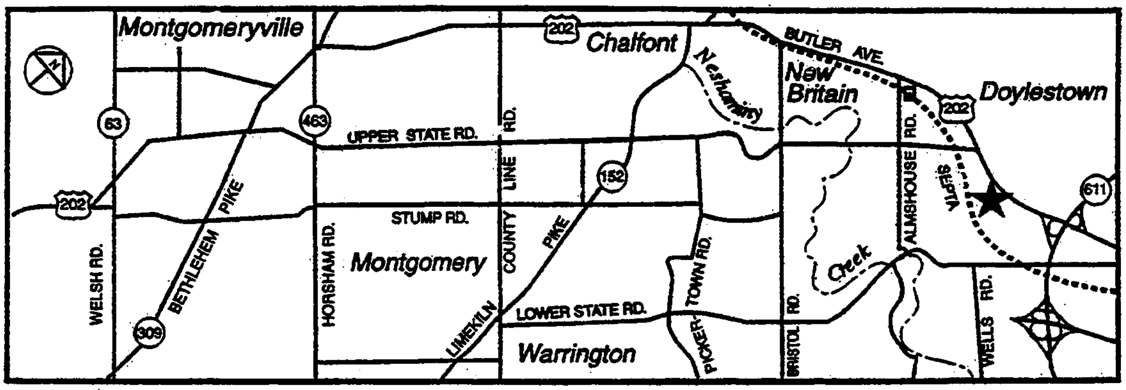
4. ***Develop graphics.*** If at all possible, a map should accompany your paid ad. The importance of a clear, well-defined map cannot be overemphasized. All your other efforts can be in vain if the ad is marred by a cluttered, unreadable map.

   Exhibit 3-4, a paid ad prepared by an eastern state, illustrates several of these points. Most of the features of the ad are good. The heading, "Public Open House," stands out very effectively. The entire ad is blocked off with a

Exhibit 3-4: PAID ADVERTISEMENT FOR MEETING NOTICE

Public Open House on US 202 Planning

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is holding an informal "open house" to update the community on environmental and engineering studies underway to improve US 202 between Route 63 in Montgomeryville and Route 611 in Doylestown (Section 700). The purpose of this meeting is to update the community on the current status of the project, review the development of the proposed alternatives, and elicit public comments, concerns, and suggestions.



Date: December 13, 19_
Open House: 6:30-9:00 P.M.
Presentation: 7:30 P.M.
Location: Delaware Valley College
All Purpose Room
Student Center
700 East Butler Avenue
Doylestown

For more information:
Randy Wagner, P.E.
Project Manager
PennDOT District 6-0
200 Radnor-Chester Road
St. Davids, PA 19087
Telephone: (610) 964-6548

This location is accessible to persons having disabilities. Any person having special needs or requiring special aid is requested to contact the PennDOT District 6-0 office at (610) 964-6548.

border, describes the project, the purpose of the meeting, its date, time, and place, and gives the name of an agency person to contact for further information. The map is simple and clear. The ad also indicates the meeting's accessibility to disabled persons.

For other examples of paid ads, see the discussion under Public Notices that begins on **page 88.**

5. ***Meet with the editor(s) or ad manager(s).*** An agency representative should explain the purpose of the ad and stress that it is not meant to appear in the classifieds. Suggest that, if at all possible, the ad should not be placed on a page with other advertising—or with obituaries, since such positioning would reduce the ad's visibility.

2. Radio and television

Spot announcements on radio and television are usually limited to public service announcements, which stations provide at no cost to an agency. Rather than prepare special scripts for use on radio and television, a task that involves professional skills, copies of press releases sent to newspapers can be used. Remember, one of the drawbacks of both radio and television is that there is little, if any, control over the time slot in which the announcement is made. However, radio spots on foreign language stations have been found to be effective if they reflect a substantial part of the project or planning area population.

Some local stations offer 30- or 60-second live interviews with agency personnel, during which the agency can give a meeting or hearing's "vital statistics." Although effectiveness in reaching large audiences is unproven, these "spots" can give an agency a public personality that can be valuable.

DIRECT MAILINGS

Direct mailings represent a personalized means by which to notify the public of meetings and hearings. They may be sent to individuals on a project mailing list, to an entire community, or to a representative sampling. They are most easily used for transportation projects and less useful for planning, with its large areas and corresponding mailing costs.

Advantages

- A personalized approach is more apt to encourage people to attend meetings.
- Most can be prepared quickly.
- Most can be inexpensively reproduced.

- They ensure contact of potentially affected residents who might not learn of meetings and hearings through other notification means.

- They provide an opportunity for an agency to focus on or stress issues that will be discussed at the meeting or hearing.

Disadvantages

- Mass mailings are often treated as junk mail and thrown away without being read.

- A good deal of time and energy must be spent in developing and maintaining an accurate and comprehensive mailing list. While computers make this job easier, it still requires considerable effort.

- Newsletters require specialized skills in the areas of writing, layout, and graphics. Once again, computer programs simplify this process enormously, but training in design skills is still key to a professional-looking product.

- Mailing costs can be high, even with bulk rate permits.

Basically, there are three direct mailing techniques: letters of invitation; newsletters; and fliers. Each has a different purpose. Of the three, ***fliers*** are the most impersonal and the least informative, merely stating that an event is taking place. Their value lies in the fact that they can be put together quickly and inexpensively. ***Letters of invitation*** represent the most personalized approach of the three. They tell enough about the project to enable the recipient to decide whether s/he wishes to attend a meeting or hearing. ***Newsletters*** are the most informative direct mailing technique. They give specific project information supplemented by maps, charts, and tables—in other words, enough information to enable the recipient to actively prepare for the meeting or hearing.

Before discussing the individual direct mailing techniques in greater detail, it is important to first address three essential preliminary activities that an agency should engage in prior to developing a mass mailing campaign:

1. ***Define the community.*** In actuality, most projects encompass more than one community. First and foremost, there is the community directly affected by a project—those people whose homes and businesses lie in the path of a transportation proposal. It is usually not difficult to identify these groups via field inspection, examination of tax maps and aerial photographs, leader interviews, etc. For the most part, they can easily be contacted through direct mailings.

   A second community consists of those groups and individuals who are not directly affected by a project, yet who have keen concerns and/or interests in the proposal. This kind of community is also not too difficult to define, because it usually makes itself known to an agency by requesting to be placed on the project mailing list, asking for project-related documents, responding to a questionnaire, calling in to an 800 number or hotline, dropping in at a site office, etc.

The third kind of community—and the one most difficult to define—is that which falls within the range of a project's secondary impacts. As diffused as these impacts are, so is the community. It is usually impractical, if not impossible, to contact a majority of this community by direct mail.

2. ***Develop a mailing list.*** The importance of developing and maintaining an accurate and comprehensive mailing list cannot be overemphasized. Initial preparation can take a good deal of time. A common method of establishing a list is inspection of tax maps. Other methods usually used in combination with this include keeping a record of the names and addresses of people who correspond with the agency on a particular project; including people who request to be placed on a mailing list; and, making field inspections. (In one southern state, for instance, two or more agency people drive the local streets, particularly in commercial areas, to take down street numbers and the names of businesses.) Mailing lists are most easily kept and updated on a computer database, which can then be sorted and printed out in various forms. If a computer is not available, a very small list can be done on photocopy labels. Mailing lists should be periodically updated by including groups and individuals that correspond with the agency and by transferring names and addresses from public meeting and hearing attendance sheets. Computerized lists allow you to include additional information, such as which meetings the person attended, the source of the name, geographic area, and topics of interest. The list can be sorted by categories to target mailings for particular purposes.

3. ***Define the scope and/or limitations of the project's public involvement program.*** Your agency should examine both its available resources and the scope and objectives of the project proposal in order to determine the magnitude of the public involvement program. A relatively small project and/or limited resources would demand a scaled-down public participation program and, probably, a modified direct-mail campaign. Abundant resources would make possible a more elaborate public involvement program, in combination with a more diversified direct mailing campaign.

A. *Letters of invitation*

Of the three basic forms of direct mailings, the letter of invitation is probably the most popular, because it is cheap, because it is standardized, and because production is possible without special equipment or art/graphics skills. Unfortunately, it is also popular because people believe it can be thrown together as a "form" letter without much effort or concern!

In preparing a letter of invitation, remember that it should be designed to encourage people to attend a meeting or hearing by giving them just enough project information to help them decide whether the event is of interest to them. It should *not* aim at encouraging people to call or visit the agency, develop letter-writing campaigns, or take a stance for or against the project. Furthermore, where appropriate, a letter of invitation should be non-alarmist in tone; the agency should indicate as specifically as possible that receipt of the letter does not imply that the recipient is necessarily being actively affected by the project.

Traditionally, rules for structuring letters of invitation have stressed keeping them brief and direct. It is important to adhere to the latter dictum, particularly in the first two paragraphs of the letter (see below). It is perhaps not as important to pay as strict attention to the *length* of the letter; in fact, more concern should be given to content and comprehensiveness. The following is a *suggested* format for use when writing letters of invitation:

Paragraph	
1	statement of meeting; location, date, and time of meeting;
2	purpose of meeting; concerns to be addressed;
3	brief history of the project and public involvement program;
4	agency personnel who will attend;
5	closing, including name and phone number of person to contact for information.

Usually, additional information needs to be incorporated into a letter of invitation to a ***public hearing.*** Such information includes:

- content and length of the official agency presentation;
- schedule of pre-hearing information sessions;
- procedure for registering to give testimony;
- availability of maps, charts, and other documents.;
- instructions concerning when and where to submit written statements.

See the example presented as **Exhibit 3-5.**

There are special features that add to the personal nature and/or effectiveness of a letter of invitation. If your mailing list is computerized, you can address each letter personally via the "mail merge" function. Also popular are clip-off coupons to make comments or suggest other people to invite. You might also consider enclosing speakers' cards with your letters of invitation, so that people can fill them out at home and hand them to agency greeters when they arrive at the meeting.

An appealing letter of invitation to a public meeting is included as **Exhibit 3-6.** The accompanying map shows both meeting sites and the project area. Notice the simplicity of detail—only the essential roadways and bodies of water are included to orient a potential participant. The shaded box highlights the project area.

Distribution. Generally speaking, letters of invitation should be mailed 14 days before the meeting or hearing to ensure their receipt by the public 10-12 days prior to the gathering.

Exhibit 3-5: SAMPLE PUBLIC HEARING INVITATION LETTER

Mr. James Jones
16 Southern Street
Trenton, New Jersey

May 26, 19__

Dear Mr. Jones:

The New Jersey Department of Transportation invites you to a combined corridor-design public hearing on I-195, from Arena Drive to the I-295 interchange; I-295 from Route 130 to Kuser Road; Route 29, from Ferry Street to the I-295 interchange; and Route 129 from Route 1 to Route 29. The hearing will be held at the Grove Junior High School, 901 White Horse-Hamilton Square Road, Hamilton Township, on July 8, from 7:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. It will provide an opportunity for interested individuals and groups to offer their views, concerns, and comments on the goals, objectives, and impacts of the proposal.

To allow adequate opportunity for discussion of the project prior to the hearing, the Department has scheduled an informal information forum at the school on June 29, from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

The hearing itself will include an official presentation, to be given on July 8 at 7:00 P.M. All time from 7:30 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. will be set aside to allow individuals to give testimony concerning the project. This testimony will be recorded and become part of the Official Public Hearing Record. Questions posed as part of an individual's statement will be officially addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. In addition, Department personnel will be available in a display and information area at the hearing site from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. and from 6:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. to answer questions and discuss project-related issues.

If you wish to speak, you may sign up upon arriving at the hearing. Instead of or in addition to speaking, you may provide written statements and/or exhibits. Be sure to submit these to the Office of Community Involvement by August 9 (30 days after the close of the hearing).

Finally, if you wish to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Statement that has been prepared for the project, it is available at the following locations:

- New Jersey Department of Transportation Library, Room 130, 1035 Parkway Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08625
- New Jersey State Clearinghouse, 329 West State Street, Trenton, NJ
- Federal Highway Administration Regional Office, 4 Normanskill Blvd., Delmar, NY
- Mercer County Administration Office, 640 Broad Street, Trenton, NJ 08607
- Burlington County Administration Office, 49 Rancocas Road, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060
- Burlington County Library, Woodlane Road, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060
- Ewing Township branch, Mercer County Library, Scotch Road, Trenton, NJ 08628.

The Statement is also available at the municipal buildings and main branches of the public libraries of the Cities of Trenton and Bordentown, and the Townships of Hamilton and Bordentown.

We look forward to seeing you at the hearing and hope you will contact us at (609) 555-5555 if you have any questions in the interim.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe
Director, Public Involvement

Exhibit 3-6: SAMPLE PUBLIC MEETING INVITATION LETTER

Minnesota Department of Transportation

District 9
3485 Hadley Avenue North, Box 2050
North Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55109

October 5, 19__ (612) 770-2311

Dear Resident:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will hold two informal public informational meetings on a new proposal to improve traffic flow through the intersection of T.H. 13 and T.H. 55 southeast of the Mendota Bridge. The meetings will be held on Thursday, October 20, at the Mendota Heights Community Hall, and on Tuesday, October 25, at the Mendota V.F.W. Hall. Both meetings will begin at 7:30 P.M.

The Mendota project, as we call it, proposes to improve traffic flow at this intersection by:

- reducing congestion during rush hour periods;
- reducing the accident rate;
- providing better traffic movements, local and through; and
- making better use of the Mendota Bridge as a major river crossing.

The project would replace the existing intersection on T.H. 55, at T.H. 13 and at T.H. 110, with interchanges to avoid cross-traffic at the intersections. The major features of the project include:

- reconstruction of T.H. 110 from Lexington Avenue to T.H. 55;
- reconstruction of T.H. 55 from the Mendota Bridge to Mendota Heights Road;
- relocation and reconstruction of T.H. 13 to the east along T.H. 55. This relocation will occur from the proposed I-494 bridges to the Mendota business district;
- the junction of these reconstructed roads will become interchanges (bridges and ramps/loops);
- construction of frontage roads to provide local circulation.

We would like to discuss this proposal with you and your neighbors at the information meetings—to bring you up-to-date on the status of this project, explain the proposal to you, and, most importantly, give you an opportunity to review and comment on the proposal early in the planning process.

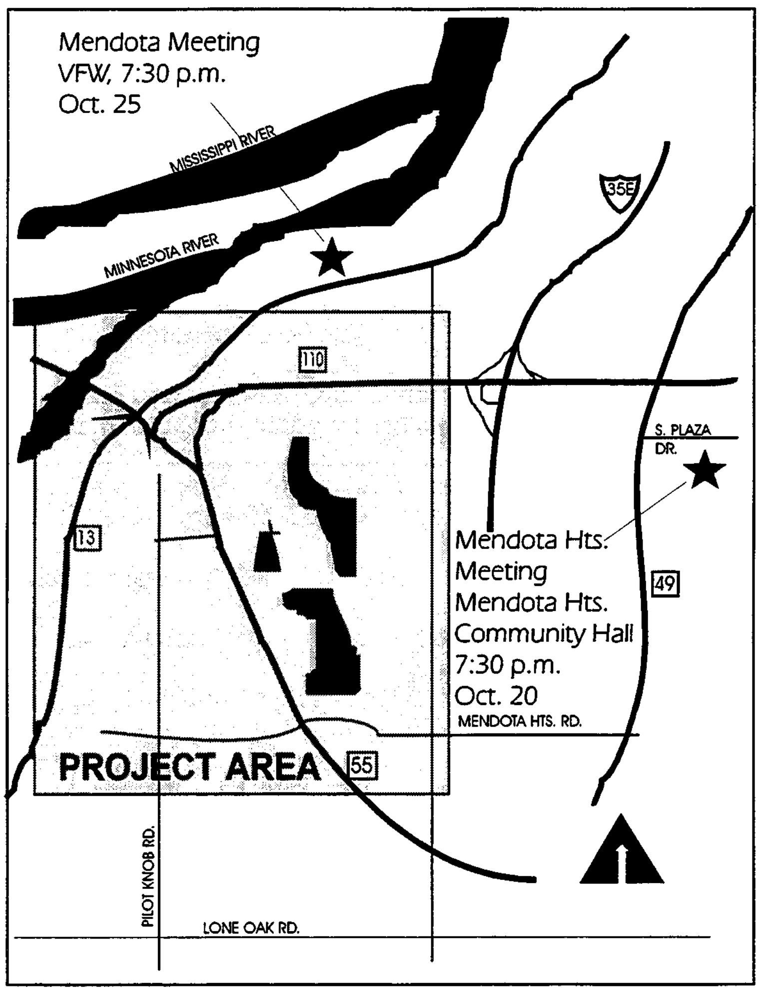
Exhibit 3-6, continued

Please plan to attend the meeting scheduled for your area and let us know how this proposal wil affect you. It should be an informative and interesting evening for all of us. If the meeting date scheduled for your area is inconvenient, feel free to attend the other meeting.

If you have any questions, give Project Manager Curtis L. Gobell, P.E., a call at 555-2311, extension 219.

Sincerely,

John Smith, P.E.
District Director



Sometimes, time and/or cost precludes mailing the letters. In such cases, consider delivering them door-to-door as handbills. In fact, the delivery of any meeting notification house-to-house by agency personnel can be very effective, particularly in a rural setting or in a case where the project is relatively small. Preliminary contact between the public and those agency people involved with the project often helps to establish a firm communications base.

B. *Fliers*

Fliers are the least expensive and simplest technique among direct mailing procedures. In essence, they are less elaborate or less sophisticated letters of invitation or newsletters pulled together as a result of a limited agency budget, limited time frame, or a poorly defined community.

Because of their limitations, fliers should be used only if one or more of the above situations exist. Chief among their limitations is the amount of information they can contain. Their primary objective is advertising the place, date, and time of a meeting or hearing without elaborating on such issues as its purpose, concerns to be addressed, project scope, attendant studies, etc.

Like letters of invitation and newsletters, fliers can be used as handbills. You might also consider distributing them to classes of school children who, in turn, can take them home to their parents. Make sure you first check with the school's principal and/or superintendent.

Another way to distribute fliers is to place stacks of them in public places such as supermarkets, post offices, stores, banks, municipal buildings, tribal offices, etc. These non-traditional places provide good ways to reach non-traditional participants or members of a particular group, such as Native American tribe members.

Still another way is to place them on the windshields of automobiles. (*Note:* Many municipalities have ordinances against such tactics, so check with the town hall before trying this technique.)

C. *Newsletters*

A carefully prepared, professional-looking newsletter can be a valuable multi-purpose mechanism serving as:

- an information tool;
- a notification procedure;
- a preparatory aid for people planning to attend a meeting or hearing; and
- a meeting/hearing handout.

Although production of a comprehensive newsletter requires careful preparation of content, a variety of technical skills, good internal coordination, and a reasonably long time frame, many agencies find it well worth the effort. To determine whether a newsletter is an appropriate communication technique for any given project, consider the following:

1. ***Overall project characteristics.*** Not all projects lend themselves to newsletter preparation and distribution. As previously mentioned, newsletters are most effective if used as a *continuing* mechanism for keeping the community informed about a large, complex, and/or controversial project. Only then does the potential readership population and number of "newsworthy" items justify the substantial expenditure of time, money, and people power. In all other cases—particularly if you are considering a project not likely to have significant social, economic, or environmental effects, or a proposal that will not require an ongoing public involvement effort—less time- and labor-intensive techniques would be better choices.

2. ***Overall community characteristics.*** Even if your project lends itself to newsletter distribution, your project community may not. Specific educational, social, and cultural characteristics may preclude the effective use of newsletters as a basic communication vehicle. Factors that should be considered include the following:

   - **A wide range of educational levels in the project community.** This makes it difficult to develop a style and format appropriate to the group as a whole. Since the principal objective is to reach as many people as possible, a newsletter that is not broad-based in appeal and "universally" comprehensible is of little value.

   - **A low degree of newspaper readership.** If people are not reading general-circulation newspapers, chances are they won't read your newsletter, either!

   - **A large non-English-speaking population.** If your ability to reach large segments of the project population is hampered by language barriers, bilingual and even trilingual newsletters should be considered. If agency resources preclude such a comprehensive effort, it is probably wiser to choose a notification document that is shorter, simpler, and easier to translate.

3. ***Available agency resources.***

   - **People.** Newsletter production is a many-faceted activity that requires expertise in writing, editing, and layout. Whereas other notification techniques permit you to rehash basic technical data without much elaboration, effective newsletter preparation requires you to organize and present information in an imaginative and readable manner.

     Surveys show that even an informative and relevant newsletter will not be read if it is characterized by poor writing, undistinguished graphics, or a haphazard or crowded look. The sophisticated kinds of printed materials the general public has become accustomed to seeing in recent years make it doubly important for your newsletter to look professional and attractive. Remember that your newsletter conveys your agency's "image" to the people it hopes to reach. Therefore, if your agency resources do not include talented writers, editors, artists, and/or desktop "publishers," it is generally better to select another technique or hire an outside consultant.

CONSULTANT SELECTION GUIDELINES

If you decide to use an outside consultant, choose a firm with proven experience in writing, graphics, and/or public relations. Do not turn to the engineering and environmental firms with which you generally work! In most cases, they will not be able to provide a satisfactory newsletter. Remember, you are looking not for technical expertise but for a "translator" to convert complicated data into an easily understandable narrative and graphic form.

- **Time.** Time considerations play an important role in determining the feasibility of newsletter preparation. At a minimum, a ***two-month period*** should be allowed for writing, layout, preparation of graphics, editing, printing, and distribution. In planning a production schedule, don't shortchange yourself by aiming for a crash program. On the contrary, leave leg room for last-minute changes, printing delays, and the unpredictability of bulk mailing. Remember Murphy's Law: "If anything can go wrong, it will." So plan your production schedule accordingly.

- **Budget.** Costs involved in newsletter preparation vary significantly, depending on a multitude of factors. In general, expenses can be kept to a minimum if in-house capabilities are extensive and include all aspects of printing and distribution. On the other hand, consultant fees are usually high and are likely to double overall cost.

  In deciding whether to opt for newsletter production, the advantages of a multi-use publication should always be kept in mind. By performing many of the functions of letters of invitation, handout packets, and follow-up materials, a newsletter can telescope a variety of activities that would normally be scattered throughout the meeting preparation process. The result is likely to be a substantial long-range savings in time, money, and effort. In spite of the significant initial investment of resources, serious consideration should be given to newsletter preparation, when appropriate for your particular project.

Initial Preparation

Once you have determined that a newsletter is the most appropriate way to communicate your project information, it is essential to develop a comprehensive schedule of necessary activities and time frames. As with all other aspects of a public involvement program, ***planning is the key to an effective end-product.*** Although the content of a given newsletter is, to a large degree, dictated by individual project components and overall community needs, other aspects of newsletter production—layout, use of graphics, etc.—share a number of common elements. Consequently, your initial preparatory activities should focus on finalizing the following:

- **Content.** In defining the content of a newsletter, it is helpful to brainstorm ideas for articles and graphics. Itemize basic issues that are crucial to a thorough understanding of topics that will be addressed at the upcoming meeting. After generating a thorough list, re-order the items according to their importance: What, for instance, is the key topic that needs to be covered in this edition of the newsletter? The lead article should address that topic. Special features that might give the newsletter an added element of interest can be folded in later. For example, one eastern state that generally distributes four-page self-mailing newsletter prior to each major community meeting has developed an outline of "bread and butter" issues, included here as **Exhibit 3-7,** with an accompanying clip-out coupon as **Exhibit 3-8.**

  - ***Public hearing insert.*** Whenever a newsletter is distributed to announce a public hearing as well as an impact meeting, a special two-page insert is included. One page discusses guidelines and procedures that will govern conduct of the hearing. The other lists basic information relating to all aspects of speaking at the hearing and submitting written testimony. This State always incorporates a clip-out preregistration form. However, as noted above on page 70, pre-registration leads to logistical problems.

  - ***Special features.*** Once you have identified topics that are essential to a comprehensive and informative newsletter, give some thought to including one or more special features. Properly planned and presented, they add a lively touch to a technically oriented publication.

    - *Quizzes* can be useful because they help people learn about a project or plan in an enjoyable way. For example, a New England town's civic advisory committee included a quiz in an issue of its newsletter, *Feedback.* In addition to providing an opportunity for "active participation," the quiz cleverly communicated specific facts and project details. It is reprinted here as **Exhibit 3-9.**

      The concept of a quiz can be applied to virtually every aspect of the transportation process and may be particularly effective as a means of relating social, environmental, or economic impact data. Any quiz that is timely, relevant, and fun is likely to be well-received.

    - If you can identify principal areas of concern and/or confusion that relate to your project or plan, you may want to clarify them in simple ***question-and-answer*** fashion. A number of agencies include a question-and-answer section to deal with a range of topics including right-of-way, project development, environmental concerns, and funding.

    - A ***letters to the editor*** column is another way to allow readers to participate. A word of caution, however: This technique can backfire unless you carefully spell out guidelines and regulations in the first issue. Overall policies regarding editing the materials, limiting the number of words, etc., must be clearly communicated to counteract charges of bias that may otherwise be raised—particularly if the plan or project is controversial. In developing guidelines, remember that

Exhibit 3-7: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER PROGRAM

Newsletter #1: Introductory Meeting

Page 1	Map of study area Feature article on goals and objectives of study. This can include discussion of study guidelines, background, and basic project information.
Page 2	Feature article on scope of study, both geographically and from an engineering, environmental, social, and economic perspective. A list of alternatives already under consideration could be included. Feature article on study criteria. This might include general methodology, as well as such specific aspects as roadway geometry, traffic patterns and projections, cost, and environmental and community impacts.
Page 3	Brief introduction to study team, including any participating consultants. Outline of proposed public involvement program. This might include a description of planned activities, a tentative schedule of meetings, along with places, dates, times, and agendas.
Page 4	Self-mailer. Clip-out coupon (see **Exhibit 3-8**), including such information as meeting dates, name and number of agency phone contact, name and address of agency written contact.

Newsletter #2: Alternative Alignments

Page 1	Photo (perhaps relating to introductory meeting). Feature article on study progress, As an update, this can include a general discussion of public involvement, as well as of specific community input.
Pages 2 & 3	Map of alternatives under consideration. Chart describing each alternative in terms of geometry, termini, and specific engineering features.
Page 4	Mailer. Follow-up clip-out coupon.

Newsletter #3: Project Impacts Meeting and/or Corridor Public Hearing

Page 1	Map of alternate alignments. Feature article on study progress and, if appropriate, on scheduling of public hearing.
Pages 2 & 3	Comparative chart of all aspects of impact studies. Narrative summary of impact studies.
Page 4	Mailer. Follow-up clip-out coupon.

Exhibit 3-8: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER CLIP-OUT COUPON

REMINDER!

Clip this coupon—it's your reminder of the meetings, names, and telephone numbers you will need to ***get involved*** in the New York and Long Branch project.

Community Meetings

South Amboy	Tuesday, November 30, 7:30 P.M.	South Amboy High School, 249 John Street, South Amboy
Matawan	Tuesday, December 7, 7:30 P.M.	Lloyd Road Middle School, Lloyd Road, Matawan
Red Bank	Thursday, December 9, 7:30 P.M.	Red Bank Regional High School, 101 Ridge Road, Little Silver
Middletown	Wednesday, December 15, 7:30 P.M.	Middletown Village School, 145 Kings Highway, Middletown

Telephone Contact

Department of Transportation
Jane Q. Doe, Director, Public Involvement
(609) 555-5555

Written Comments and Future Mailings

This issue of NY&LB RR NEWS is the first of a series to be distributed to keep riders and residents of corridor communities up-to-date on project developments.

Written comments on matters discussed at community meetings or presented in the newsletter may be sent to the address below. If you wish to be added to the mailing list for future issues, please send your name and address (include group affiliation, if any) to:

Office of Community Development
New Jersey Department of Transportation
1035 Parkway Avenue
Trenton, NJ 08625

Exhibit 3-9: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER QUIZ

RED LINE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZ: *Do you know the facts?*

1. **The Arlington Board of Selectmen has**
   a) opposed the Red Line extension through Arlington;
   b) supported the idea of extending the Red Line through Arlington;
   c) petitioned the State legislature to give Arlington the money it needs to build the Red Line;
   d) taken a wait-and-see attitude.

2. **The State Office of Transportation and Construction**
   a) already has the money it needs to build the Red Line through to Route 128;
   b) already has the money it needs to extend the Red Line to Arlington Heights;
   c) is certain that Federal funds will be available to cover the cost of constructing the Red Line as far as Arlington Center;
   d) is waiting for the State legislature to appropriate Red Line construction funds.

3. **The Red Line Extension is expected to have the following *positive* impacts on Arlington:**
   a) spur the redevelopment of Arlington Center;
   b) hold down the pressure for property tax increases by adding to the overall tax base of Arlington;
   c) increase accessibility to Boston for those who do not have automobiles, and minimize traffic pressure on downtown Boston and adjacent cities and towns;
   d) create a linear park the entire length of Arlington;
   e) all of the above.

4. **The Red Line Extension is expected to have the following *negative* impacts on Arlington:**
   a) create additional traffic congestion in Arlington Center and Arlington Heights;
   b) create disruption, noise, and pollution problems during construction for those who live near the proposed route of the Red Line;
   c) eliminate freight service along the current B&M route, thereby jeopardizing many jobs;
   d) create additional pressure for higher-density residential development;
   e) all of the above.

5. **With the addition of two new MBTA stations in Arlington (Center and Heights), Arlington's percentage of the MBTA assessment will**
   a) probably increase substantially;
   b) probably increase slightly;
   c) probably decrease slightly;
   d) probably decrease substantially.

6. **The number of MBTA riders likely to board the Red Line Extension between Harvard Square and Arlington center on the projected 19_ opening date is**
   a) less than 1,000 a day;
   b) less than 5,000 a day;
   c) more than 8,000 a day;
   d) more than 10,000 a day.

7. **At the present time, the number of commuter parking spaces for Red Line patrons planned for Arlington Center is**
   a) 1,000;
   b) 500;
   c) 350;
   d) none.

8. **At the present time, the number of commuter parking spaces for Red Line patrons planned for the Alewife Station is**
   a) 1,000;
   b) 500;
   c) 350;
   d) none.

9. **At the present time, the number of commuter parking spaces for Red Line patrons planned for the Arlington Heights Station is**
   a) 1,000;
   b) 500;
   c) 350;
   d) none.

10. **The purpose of the Environmental Impact Statement of the Red Line Extension presently underway is to**
    a) determine the least environmentally damaging route for the Red Line;
    b) force the MBTA to clarify its position on environmental protection;
    c) identify all feasible means to minimize the adverse environmental impacts likely to be created by the Red Line;
    d) none of the above.

11. **The total cost of the Red Line Extension from Harvard Square to Arlington Heights is projected to be approximately**
    a) $1 billion;
    b) $750 million;
    c) $300 million;
    d) $100 million.

12. **Decisions about the actual design of the proposed stations**
    a) have already been made;
    b) are strictly up to the MBTA's professional staff and consultants;
    c) can be influenced by Arlington residents through participation in the next steps in the design process;
    d) can be vetoed by the Arlington Board of Selectmen.

Answers:
1b, 2c, 3e, 4e, 5c, 6c, 7d, 8b, 9c, 10c, 11c, 12c

the column is designed to function as a vehicle for the readership at-large and not as a soapbox for specific interest groups.

- If you plan to use your newsletter as a meeting handout, consider leaving a page or a portion of a page blank for ***note-taking*** purposes. Your audience will appreciate the opportunity to jot down comments and questions during a presentation without scrambling for paper.

- **Layout.** Since the "look" of a newsletter is the first characteristic to encourage or discourage potential readers, an attractive and sensible layout should be a prime goal. In developing a layout, consider both aesthetics and proper placement of articles and graphic materials based on their overall importance and degree of interest. The following general tips may be helpful in this regard:

  - ***Front page.*** People generally look at the front page of a newsletter before turning to an inside feature. This underscores the importance of a striking logo, exciting front-page headlines, and the prominent placement of the lead article.

    Exhibit 3-10 shows three interesting, eye-catching, relatively low-budget logos. While they are reproduced here in black and white, all three make excellent use of colored stock and either one or two colors of ink. All three incorporate a visual "icon" and use type faces that are both attractive and readable.

    Exhibit 3-11 shows another attractive, somewhat more expensive, logo. This one uses three colors of ink (red, blue, and black) on white stock. The simplified map defines the project area clearly, while the name "Connections" links it to the project itself, the Southtowns Connector/ Buffalo Outer Harbor Major Investment Study.

USE DISCRETION IN DESIGNING A LOGO!

Although an interesting logo adds eye appeal and unity to a newsletter, a "cute" design does just the opposite. It can easily alienate your readership and make the seriousness of your entire endeavor suspect.

  - ***Back page.*** People often look at the back page of a newsletter after scanning the front page. To maximize its potential, use the back page to highlight information relating to future meetings, follow-up contacts, or other items of general interest.

  - ***Right-hand pages.*** In most western cultures, people are accustomed to looking at the right-hand page of a newsletter before looking at the left-hand page. It is therefore a good idea to make right-hand pages as inviting and visually exciting as possible. Maps, charts, photographs, and other graphics can add eye appeal.

Exhibit 3-10: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER LOGOS

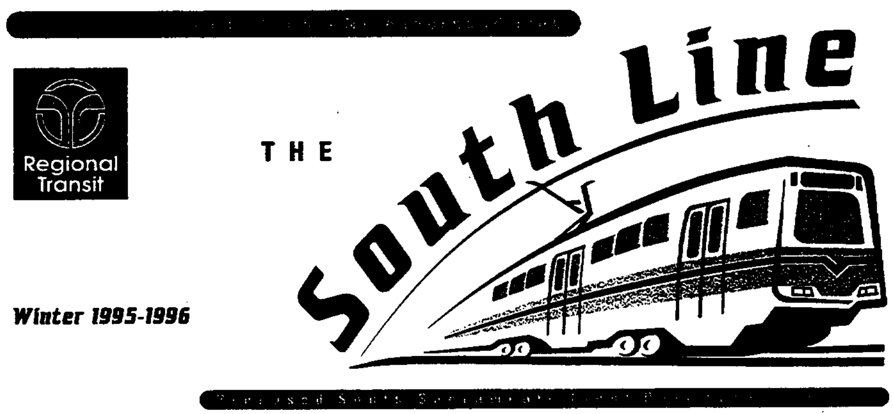


Exhibit 3-11: SAMPLE NEWSLETTER LOGO

Connections

Newsletter of the Southtowns Connector/Buffalo Outer Harbor Major Investment Study

A Message from the Project Director

Skyway to Outer Harbor

In 1991, the New York State Department of Transportation completed a feasibility study which evaluated alternatives for a highway linking downtown Buffalo with the Southtowns area. It was envisioned that a new Southtowns Connector, as it has come to be known, would:

- Divert commercial traffic away from the waterfront.
- Improve commuting to downtown Buffalo.
- Encourage economic development.

The next step in the implementation of a major transportation improvement is a Major Investment Study (MIS). As required by federal law, an MIS is a collaborative process during which:

- The full extent of transportation problems for the area is identified.
- Goals and objectives for dealing with these problems are developed.
- Reasonable and practical alternatives to solve the problems are formulated and evaluated.
- Preferred alternatives are selected.

The MIS we have initiated involves a comprehensive public involvement program in which members and officials of the local communities meet and provide input to the study. This input will help identify and analyze the transportation issues in the areas we hope to serve.

This is our first newsletter for the Southtowns Connector/Buffalo Outer Harbor MIS. The newsletter is a part of our public involvement program and your input is important to us. Please feel free to direct any comments or questions to our Public Information Hotline at (800) 782-0880, or stop by our Public Information Office. Look for additional newsletters to keep you informed!

I look forward to working with you on this exciting study!

Gary Gottlieb
Project Director
New York State
Department of Transportation
Public Information Office
Waterfront Village Center
50 Lakefront Boulevard
Suite 105
Buffalo, N.Y. 14202

New York State Department of Transportation

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courtesy of the Southtowns Connector/Buffalo Outer Harbor Major Investment Study

- *Centerfold.* The center double-page spread of a newsletter has traditionally been a particular focus of attention. As you map out a preliminary layout, plan something special for this area. It is particularly suitable for in-depth exploration of such elements as a spread on various project alternatives. A map, a chart, or a creatively laid out feature article is also an appropriate choice. Be careful to place elements so that the fold does not distort or destroy readability. See **Exhibit 3-12** for an effective use of a newsletter centerfold discussing transit plan alternatives.

- *Composition.* As a rule, no more than half of each page should be filled with text. A crowded page intimidates and discourages readership. If an in-depth article runs long, break up the content into easily digestible chunks by using subheads. A reader should be able to grasp the essence of a long article by scanning the subheads.

  The most effective way to encourage readership is by ***incorporating graphics and white space.*** Most experts agree that good layout includes a large, bold, and simple graphic on every page. In addition to serving as a strong visual stimulus, a relevant drawing, photograph, map, or chart conveys substantial amounts of information in an unpedantic manner.

  When developing newsletter graphics, remember that they must be clear and ***self-explanatory.*** For example, a useful newsletter map must include a sharp background; crisp, readable lettering; and well-defined points of reference. **Exhibit 3-13** shows a clear, simple project map included in a newsletter for a fixed guideway study in North Carolina. The varied kinds of lines denote different phases of the regional transit plan.

- *Size.* An important element of good layout is determining a suitable size for your newsletter. A large bulky document, such as an 11"x17" newsletter, is not only costly in terms of production and distribution but unwieldy and cumbersome for the reader.

  Although offbeat sizes may appeal to you, a standard 8½"x11" document has many advantages. In addition to the cost-effectiveness of the readily available paper size, an 8½"x11" newsletter is manageable in terms of both mailing and reading. Because it is the perfect size to fold for use as a self-mailer, it can significantly reduce distribution costs.

  To apply the above guidelines to layout of a specific newsletter, experiment with a variety of page formats on a trial-and-error basis. After determining the approximate length of each text and graphic feature, sketch out a number of possible page layouts, or dummies. While this can be done by hand, numerous computer software programs are available that make this process easy, even for people with little design experience. Desktop publishing allows you to experiment and come up with a particular "look"; at the same time, it offers great flexibility in how you put together the various elements. Each dummy indicates how a specific

Exhibit 3-12 SAMPLE NEWSLETTER CENTERFOLD LAYOUT

page 10

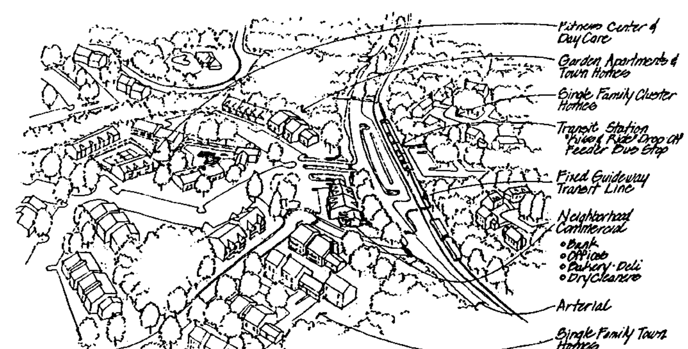
What do we mean by "Transit-friendly" Land Use?

In 1996, Elaine and Fred moved into their quiet neighborhood with its assortment of attractive one-, two-, and three-story houses built on small lots. During the work week, they both leave home at about 7:30 a.m. and walk along sidewalks through their tree-lined neighborhood to their son's pre-school, next door to the elementary school he will attend in two years.

Fred walks another six blocks to his office building, while Elaine drops some letters off at the post office, stops at the bakery to buy pastries for a review session, and purchases a newspaper before cated outside the Triangle. His firm leased space in the newly-constructed four-story building because it was affordable and about four blocks away from the multi-modal transit center, currently in its first year of operation. One of Fred's accounts is in an adjacent four-story office building, three will soon move into the 60,000-square-foot retail/restaurant complex under construction near the bakery, and the rest are in Durham and Hillsborough.

In mid-1999, when the first phase of the fixed guideway service between Raleigh and Durham is operating, Fred will be some other luxuries, as well as savings in anticipation of expanding their family. Within half a mile of their house there is a major grocery store and some specialty food stores, a drug store, laundry and dry cleaners, a combination bookstore and cafe, a movie theatre, banks, a couple of restaurants, professional and medical services, and a library.

Everything is connected by a network of sidewalks and mid-block connectors. Metered parking is available on the streets, and behind some buildings there are parking structures or surface lots. Street lighting, street trees and building



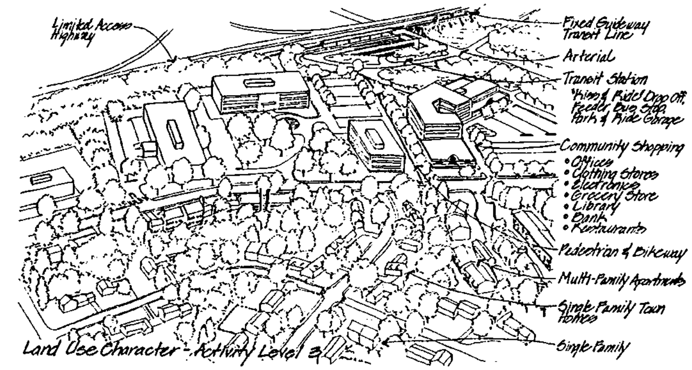
Land Use Character - Activity Level 2

she boards the 7:50 a.m. express bus to Research Triangle Park. During the trip, she reviews her schedule and priorities for the day and reads over some material in preparation for her meeting. The Environmental Protection Agency Commuter Shuttle will be waiting at the RTP bus center to take her to her office. By 8:30 a.m., she will be at her desk, relaxed and already organized for the day's challenges.

As a CPA, Fred spends half of his time in the office monitoring his staff's work-sent by modem from clients' offices lo- able to board the train at the multi-modal station and get off in downtown Durham, within easy walking distance of his clients. Trips to Hillsborough may be a combination of train and shuttle bus in the future, but for now Fred uses one of the company cars, retrieving it from the garage at the multi-modal center and parking it in similar facilities in Durham and Hillsborough.

Living a little under half a mile from the multi-modal transit station has allowed Fred and Elaine to use the money usually allocated to a second car for travel and canopies, first- and second-story retail services, and sidewalk cafes and carts are among the elements that make walking enjoyable and safe. Fred and Elaine use their car for trips to major regional shopping centers, visiting friends who live in the outlying suburbs and for recreation. Summer evenings and on weekends they use the bike trail system that connects them to the surrounding lower-density neighborhoods and the regional park. When work in the rail corridor is complete, as system of trails will also parallel portions of the transit line.

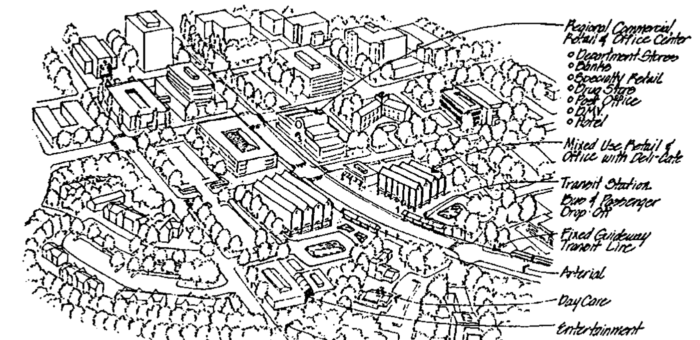
page 11



Land Use Character - Activity Level 3

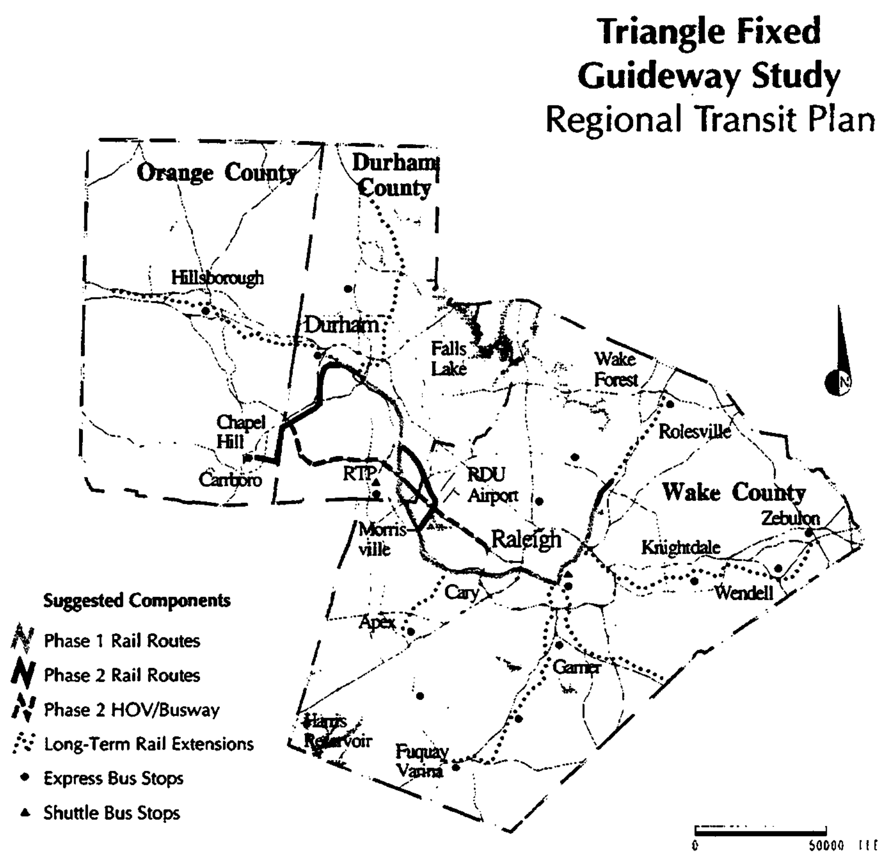
After work on this particular evening, Fred is cleaning out a filing cabinet and comes across some material they received when the regional transit system was in the initial planning stages. The document brings back memories of their initial apprehensions regarding the whole idea of living on a 50'x80' lot in a 2,500-square-foot two-story house with shopping and services less than a mile away-development referred to as pedestrian- or transit-friendly land use. Reflecting on their home and neighborhood, its proximity and access to shopping, services, schools, recreation, and entertainment, and the fact that they can walk, ride bikes, take the bus or-in a couple of years-a train to work and use their car only when they choose to, it all seems very comfortable and reasonable.

NOTE: While these sketches were based on locations within the Triangle, they are artist impressions and in no way represent actual or proposed plans.



Land Use Character - Activity Level 4

Exhibit 3-13: PROJECT MAP FOR NEWSLETTER INCLUSION



composition of text, graphics, headlines, and captions will look. By comparing several carefully developed dummies, you get an excellent feel for the most effective way to present your material.

- **Style.** Once you have developed a satisfactory dummy, flesh it out with specific style and composition details. To meet your objective of getting people interested in and thinking about a particular project, appeal to your audience through an effective combination of maximum visuals, minimum text, color, typography, and eye-catching composition.

  In defining and developing a distinctive style, it is particularly important to ***know your intended audience.*** At all times, the style and approach of a newsletter must be appropriate to the group as a whole. Your message should never be geared to specific interest groups such as engineers, business people, community activists, or public officials. On the contrary, it should be principally directed at those people who have a vital interest in the project and to whom the agency is not normally accessible.

  Contrary to popular opinion, an innovative style need not be costly. A professional-looking document that identifies a project in a highly individualized manner can be inexpensively produced through creative use of a variety of design characteristics. Once again, desktop publishing software is invaluable. In addition to layout, graphics, and content itself, the most important ingredients of a simple, tasteful, and economical newsletter are:

  - ***Color.*** The substitution of colored stock for white paper is probably the simplest, least expensive way to add visual excitement to a newsletter. A number of States find that a rich tone, particularly if combined with a complementary, contrasting ink, can create a sleek and sophisticated look at minimal extra cost. Favorite stocks are yellows, browns, blues, and grays—hues that are basically conservative and soothing to the eye. Among the most popular combinations are brown ink on yellow or beige paper and dark blue or green ink on light blue paper. But there are notable exceptions: One State found that magenta ink on gray stock produced a distinguished and very readable document.

READABILITY IS KEY!

As with all other aspects of newsletter preparation, the use of colored stock must be carefully and judiciously planned. On the one hand, select a bright, lively color that draws readers in and suggests that the content is worth perusing. On the other, avoid piercing colors—such as lime green, red, orange, or any neon color—that offend the eye and make both text and illustrations difficult to read.

  - **Related costs.** While costs vary from printer to printer and from one geographic area to another, on average (at 1996 rates) using colored stock increases overall printing costs by $3.00 to $8.00 per thousand copies. Colored ink adds another $30.00. However, if you use *two* different color inks, expect your costs to increase by 75% or more.

- ***Headlines and typography.*** Exciting headlines and visually pleasing typography are two almost foolproof ways to focus attention on a newsletter. Unfortunately, headline writing is a time-consuming art. Although it is easy to say that a headline should be short, simple, and informative, it is often quite difficult to produce one that appropriately meets these criteria. Brainstorming with several project staff people is a good way to generate ideas before finalizing your headlines.

  In any case, do not settle for the "text disguised as headline" syndrome. For instance, instead of the following,

  > *Two Information Meetings and Two Location Hearings on I-70N Segment Scheduled at West Baltimore Schools for February; Route from Hilton Parkway to Union Stockyards*

  which—in the original—covered almost a half-page and was followed by a skimpy, one-column article, choose a concise, active headline:

  > *DOT Schedules I-70N Meetings and Hearings.*

  In determining a newsletter's overall "look," ***typography*** for both headlines and text is as important as content. The use of contrasting typefaces—e.g., bold and italics, serif and sans-serif—can be very effective, provided it is consistent and complementary. Conversely, an incongruent "mix and match" typography makes a newsletter sloppy and amateurish.

  A good rule of thumb (although not an absolute) is to use bold or bold italic ***sans-serif*** typefaces for headlines and display, because they are eye-catching and stand out on the page. Choose one that complements the typeface of the text. For example, the font used for chapter and section headings in this manual is a bold, sans-serif face that has a "modern" feel and complements the rounded quality of the text font.

  For greatest readability of text, choose a ***serif*** typeface—one that is simple and straightforward. In both display and text, avoid using overly fancy or "fussy" fonts for your newsletter; they distract the reader and often call so much attention to themselves that they obscure the content. For tips on typography, a myriad of books and magazines is now available in libraries, bookstores, and on-line—particularly ones relating to computer typography and how to manipulate it with desktop publishing programs.

EXPERIMENT WITH MINOR DETAILS!

In developing a newsletter, it is often fun to incorporate an interesting new twist, such as unique pagination. One agency designed big, bold, ragged, rough-hewn numbers for its publication. It worked well, particularly since the newsletter was printed on a coarse-grained, earthy stock. Be careful that these elements enhance the content and overall effectiveness of the newsletter rather than simply call attention to themselves. As always, remember the key principles of readability and attractiveness.

Before leaving the newsletter preparation section of this chapter, we would like to remind you of a couple of DON'Ts:

✗ Don't assume that a ***photocopied news sheet*** that merely lists information (such as a press release does) fulfills the objectives of a newsletter. It may be very informative, but lacking the graphics, layout, and overall design of a newsletter, it will probably be far less effective in attracting and keeping an audience.

✗ Don't ***staple*** your newsletter, if at all possible. It is very unprofessional looking. Instead, if you are aiming for a four-page, 8½"x11" newsletter, buy 11"x17" stock and fold it in half.

✗ Don't use ***flow diagrams*** unless they are absolutely essential. In addition to confusing and intimidating the average reader, the information they contain can generally be expressed more clearly through use of a traditional chart arrangement.

✗ Don't use ***cartoons*** unless they are exceptionally incisive and very well-executed. Most cartoons are silly, amateurish, and irrelevant to the subject matter. They are often turned to as "filler." Instead, try using another type of graphic or even leaving white space.

- **Editing.** Once you are pleased with the individual components of your newsletter, it is important to re-focus on how they fit together. Although careful and comprehensive editing is time-consuming, it is the only way to determine if your newsletter "hits the mark." With this in mind, make sure your editing process always includes the following:

  - ***Read all articles for clarity.*** Ask yourself: Does the message come across? Is the content suitable? Do text and graphics contain extraneous material? Does the headline appropriately "introduce" the article? If you are not satisfied with your answers, some rewrite is in order.

  - ***Check for technical jargon.*** A newsletter geared to an intelligent lay audience should not contain engineering or other technical terminology. Ask yourself if each article, chart, and table can be understood by an area resident with no transportation planning or design background. If not, it is time to start "translating."

- ***Preview all graphics for appropriateness.*** An effective newsletter has an overall cohesiveness and sense of unity. To achieve this, it is essential that graphics specifically complement the article they accompany. Before completing your editing, double-check to make sure graphics are placed correctly. A photograph of a meeting, for example, does not belong with an article on alternate alignments.

- ***Check language for clarity.*** In re-reading your copy, make sure the words you select are crisp, clear, and descriptive. Rewrite sentences and paragraphs that are overly long.

- ***Check captions and headlines for clarity and consistency.*** Captions and headlines must, at all times, appropriately suit and directly relate to the text they accompany. A mismatched caption or a headline that does not make sense detracts from the specific article, as well as from the newsletter as a whole—and may even cast doubt on the competency of the project staff. For example, one New England State described a photograph of four people reviewing plans at a conference table with the caption, "Community issues are given high priority." Since the photo gave no indication that community issues were being considered, the entire graphic became little more than an irrelevant filler.

- Develop your own ***"house style"*** for elements such as punctuation, use of numbers, the way your agency name appears or is abbreviated, etc. Contrary to popular belief, rules of punctuation and style are not absolutes. Various major publishing houses and newspapers, for instance, have devised their own distinctive style handbooks. A good starting point, however, is a reliable, widely-used, standard handbook such as that published by the U.S. Government Printing Office. For a more scholarly approach, the *Chicago Manual of Style* offers an authoritative guide to publishing style. Given the nature of the public involvement process and of the particular project community, a newsletter often demands a fairly casual approach to stylistic issues. Whatever style you choose, be sure to follow it consistently.

- **Printing.** Two key issues should be considered when choosing how your newsletter will be produced: cost-effectiveness and quality.

  At first glance, it may seem cheaper to produce a newsletter in-house on your color photocopier. Unless, however, you are printing a relatively small quantity, the labor-intensiveness of the process may make it much more cost-effective to send your newsletter to an outside printer (or an in-house one if your agency is so fortunate as to have one) who is trained and equipped to handle the complex process of coordinating two or more colors of ink, double-sided printing, folding, and collating.

Sending the newsletter to a printer not only can save time and wear-and-tear on the staff, it also can significantly enhance the quality of the newsletter. No matter how wonderful your design is, if it's not printed well it will look amateurish and unappealing.

Recent developments in computer technology and desktop publishing allow you to send a job to a printer on disk rather than in pasteup form. Among other advantages, this facilitates the process of using color separations. The printer can then generate the newsletter in the shop, often giving a much cleaner, crisper look to the type and producing clearer graphics.

Whether you send your newsletter out or produce it in-house, it is a good idea to keep tabs on the quality of the printing throughout the process—particularly if you're producing large quantities. A good printer will give you consistent quality in terms of saturation of the ink into the paper and other technical elements you may not be aware of unless they are done badly.

Printers speak a language all their own! If you frequently send work out to be printed, it behooves you to learn the terminology so that you can communicate your needs and goals clearly and concisely, ask the right questions, and avoid unpleasant surprises.

- **Distribution.** For maximum effectiveness, newsletters should be distributed as widely as an agency's budget will allow. Whenever possible, the overall project mailing list should serve as a basis for mail distribution. This can be supplemented by dropping off batches of newsletters at local libraries, municipal buildings, railroad stations, or other gathering point in the community.

WARNING

Never-substitute drop-off points for an organized mail campaign to potentially interested and affected people. Always gear your primary distribution to the population most likely to participate in project development. Other distribution techniques should be used only as auxiliary measures.

- ***Timing.*** To function as a well-planned notification tool, a newsletter should reach its destination 10 days to 2 weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. In timing your distribution, remember to allow *at least* an extra week if delivery is via bulk mail.

- *Cost.* The simplest way to reduce mailing costs is to structure the newsletter as a self-mailer and thereby eliminate the need for envelopes. The most comprehensive cost-cutting technique is, of course, a bulk mailing permit. Bulk permits can be used for any distribution of printed matter—provided the mailing consists of at least 200 identical pieces that are properly zip coded, sorted, and bundled. (The U.S. Postal Service provides a detailed booklet with all necessary, current information.)

Obtaining a bulk permit is relatively simple. Permits are issued at any post office, following payment of an annual fee plus a fee for registration of a permanent number. Bulk rates take into account both the weight and number of pieces.

The major disadvantage of bulk mailing is that delivery is very slow. In fact, ***the post office will not guarantee delivery within any given time frame.*** Effective use of bulk mailing for newsletter distribution is therefore dependent on developing a schedule that includes a substantial amount of cushion time between mailing and meeting dates.

OTHER NOTIFICATION TECHNIQUES

1. Posters

Posters are a relatively inexpensive way to notify the public of a meeting or hearing. They are particularly useful in the rural areas of an agency's jurisdiction. Their degree of elaboration and sophistication varies, depending on the agency's needs, funds, and available time. They may be printed, done individually by hand, or—depending on size—generated through desktop publishing.

Following are a few recommended guidelines for developing and using posters:

- ***Keep them simple,*** in terms of both wording and overall appearance. Include only essential details.
- ***Highlight key words*** such as "public meeting" and the project name by using large, bold type.
- ***Vary the colors*** of posters announcing each agency meeting to be held within a short period of time, while keeping the overall "look" similar. This helps people realize that your agency is publicizing different meetings and that the posters are not left over from previous events.
- ***Post them well in advance*** of the meeting or hearing (two weeks is optimum).
- ***Make sure they are conspicuous.*** Post them in well-frequented places such as town halls, stores, churches, post offices, libraries, schools, etc. (*Note:* Permission should always be received before posters are placed in any building.)
- ***Include pertinent information,*** such as time, place, date, and reason for the meeting, as well as the name of the agency conducting it. Also, it is a good Idea to include the name and telephone number of an individual at the agency who may be contacted for more information.

Exhibits 3-14 and 3-15 show examples of simple, but effective, posters.

2. Drop-in Centers and Field Offices

Some State transportation agencies make effective use of drop-in centers and field offices to provide and receive information during the planning or project development process. Located in the project area, these centers offer sources of information as well as opportunities for informal meetings with people who might not customarily attend structured meetings or hearings.

To obtain full visibility in a community, drop-in centers and field offices should be publicized in newspapers, by handouts and posters, on local radio and television stations, and on an agency's on-line home page. Periodic mailings can be made to all local community groups and interested individuals. Staff assigned to these offices should be knowledgeable about the affected area and project. Office hours should be based on the lifestyles and work habits of people in the area.

In many States, trailers—either owned by the State transportation agency or rented for a specific project—are used to provide a highly mobile means of establishing a field office. Trailers can be quickly moved and set up on a project or can circulate within a community on a slower, more regular basis. The placement of trailers in shopping centers is particularly effective, due to their visibility and convenience for large numbers of people.

3. On-line services

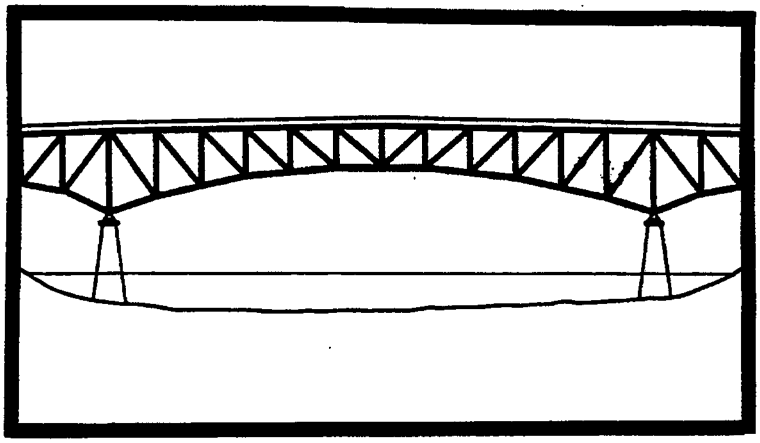
The swift development of computer technology, particularly in recent years, has enabled transportation agencies to explore yet another avenue for community outreach round-the-clock: on-line services such as E-mail and electronic bulletin boards. Community people who have access to a computer modem—in their own homes or in libraries and other public locations—can get information and provide input to agencies conveniently and quickly via the Internet.

As a subscriber to on-line services, your agency can have a specific electronic address (or "mailbox") and be connected to other subscribers via telephone lines and a computer modem. You can set up a "home page" for conveying basic information about the agency and its current projects. You can also set up an index or "hot buttons" on the home page to enable participants to get further information on a variety of topics. Another important feature can be an agency calendar, announcing upcoming meetings and hearings, along with dates, times, locations, and topics of discussion. In this way, participants can collect information; view a picture, animation, or video; plan their schedule to attend a public hearing; or direct a specific inquiry to the agency or an appropriate staff member.

Exhibit 3-14: SAMPLE POSTER

WANTED

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CLAIRTON/GLASSPORT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT-DESIGN LOCATION STUDY



ATTEND THE PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Location: Clairton Council Chambers
551 Ravensburg Blvd.
Clairton, PA 15025

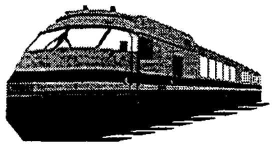
Date: Monday, November 16, 19__

Time: Any time between 4:00 and 8:00 P.M.

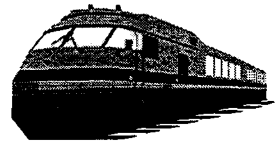
REWARD: A SOLUTION TO A CURRENT COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Exhibit 3-15: EFFECTIVE MEETING (HEARING) POSTER



NEW BEDFORD/ FALL RIVER COMMUTER RAIL PROJECT



OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Monday, September 25, 19__ ◆ 7:00–9:00 P.M.
Norton High School, 66 West Main Street

Please join us at an open public meeting to discuss work in progress on the extension of MBTA commuter rail service to Fall River and New Bedford. There will be a presentation of preliminary conceptual plans for the line, followed by a question-and-answer session with MBTA project officials and consultants. This is the first in a series of public meetings being held in this area regarding the project. *If you need further information or have questions prior to the meeting, please call Alan Austin at (617) 000-0000.*

This facility is accessible for people with disabilities. If you have other special needs, or if you are hearing-impaired and will require a sign interpreter, please let us know at least 24 hours in advance.

If you require interpretation in another language, please let us know at least 24 hours in advance.

Directions: *By car:* Route 140 to West Main Street. Norton High School is about one half-mile from intersection; park to right. ***By transit:*** MBTA Commuter Rail from South Station/Back Bay to Attleboro. Phone: (617) 000-0000; take GATRA (hourly service; call (508) 000-0000) to downtown Norton. Walk one quarter-mile west to Norton High School.

T

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Similarly, your agency can get feedback from people affected by a plan or project by offering public opinion surveys on-line. Using their computers, people can register their comments and concerns at length, in private, and at a time and place convenient to them. People who respond via on-line services can also request to be added to your mailing list.

One of the greatest advantages of on-line services is their ability to convey ***up-to-date information*** about a transportation plan or project. Agencies can update or change their information almost daily, if they choose, and add or delete elements such as surveys at any time.

4. Hotlines

Telephone "hotlines" are a popular way to receive inquiries from the public—whether about an agency in general or about a specific project, plan, or issue. Most agency hotlines operate at least during normal business hours and are answered by a staff person, when available, or by an answering machine that gives the caller a number of options for further information. Many agencies offer 24-hour hotlines, particularly at key points in a project or plan's development.

Some hotlines also offer FAX-on-demand services, allowing participants to quickly obtain copies of documents pertinent to an upcoming meeting, hearing, or open house. For short documents, these services are competitive with traditional mail services, especially if the FAXes are sent during off-hours, when rates are lower.

When your agency sets up a hotline, make sure it will be accessible to people with hearing or speech disabilities by providing a special TDD (telecommunications for the deaf) number. TDD services allow an agency to reach segments of the project population who might not otherwise be able to participate.

Like on-line services, hotlines can easily be kept up-to-date. A staff person can be appointed to take charge of assuring that the most current information is available to callers.

5. Interactive video displays and kiosks

Another technological advance that makes the notification process simpler and more far-reaching is interactive video. Similar to automatic teller machines, with which most Americans are familiar, interactive video displays and kiosks offer "menus" of options for interaction between a person and a computer. Like on-line services, most interactive displays open with a basic presentation that invites the viewer to explore further options by pressing a button, typing a word, or using a mouse or trackball. These options can include:

- getting more information on a specific topic;
- providing feedback on a specific planning or project issue;

- entering a special request to the agency or joining a mailing list.

Interactive displays and kiosks are very effective if placed in strategic locations. Shopping malls and other well-populated sites are particularly good for attracting participation and may draw many people who would not otherwise be aware of your agency's activities.

Chapter 4. HANDOUTS

Handout materials have a unique relationship to a meeting or hearing, since they are often used before, during, and after the event. A well-conceived and designed handout can therefore serve as an ongoing link between agency and community. As a multi-purpose document, it can introduce and detail the meeting subject, provide a handy companion to an agency presentation, and function as a tangible reference check after the meeting.

The variety of handout possibilities and combinations is almost endless. In selecting and preparing materials, very few general guidelines prevail—except that the handout must be clear, relevant, up-to-date, and as self-explanatory as possible. Sometimes handouts are specifically prepared for distribution at a public gathering. At other times, materials that have previously been prepared for other purposes can very effectively be used. In general, it is helpful if at least one of the handouts directly relates to the agency presentation and exhibit. For example, a map or photo that is a reduced version of the major graphic display is always relevant and often facilitates understanding of the presentation.

The principal types of handouts that are specifically prepared for a given meeting or hearing include the following:

- maps of the planning area showing major transportation features or of the project area showing alternative alignments, etc. (including aerial photographs);

- photographs of models, computer-generated images, sketches, or other renderings of the proposed facility;

- charts that itemize and compare significant facts of each planning or project alternative (e.g., for alignment alternatives there are costs; lengths; right-of-way requirements; social, environmental and economic impacts);

- plan- or project-related pamphlets, brochures, and booklets; and

- agendas, lists of panel members, and other administrative items.

In developing any of the above, it is important to keep in mind the wide range of possible resource expenditures. You can minimize the time, cost, and labor involved in preparing handouts by 1) abstracting and modifying materials from exhibits, draft Environmental Impact Statements, etc., whenever possible; and 2) considering such multi-purpose materials as newsletters, which can be used both as notification and as handout documents. For a detailed discussion of newsletters, please turn to **pages 105-123 of Chapter 3. Notification Techniques.**

In addition to newsletters, examples of materials that are ordinarily prepared for purposes other than distribution at meetings but that may also be used as handouts include:

- fliers;

- letters of invitation and other notification documents;
- general pamphlets, brochures, and booklets (including process guidelines, action plans, and right-of-way materials; and
- position papers and summary reports.

INCLUDE FORMS FOR AUDIENCE USE

Handout materials should always include such items as registration cards, comment cards or forms, meeting evaluation forms, and/or questionnaires. In addition to promoting a feeling of public involvement and activity, these forms are valuable in terms of follow-up activities, mailing list updates, and agency self-evaluation.

Sometimes it is effective to combine different types of handouts into a meeting "packet." Such a packet might include two, three, or all of the aforementioned items. At a minimum, it usually consists of registration and speakers' cards, a comment card or form, a meeting evaluation form, a project map, and, perhaps, a brochure or booklet.

In determining the number and specific types of appropriate handouts for a given meeting, the following factors should be considered:

- the point in the planning or project development process at which the meeting is being held. A meeting held near the end of the process would lend itself to a greater variety of handouts, as a result of information and data compiled during the planning or project studies;
- the degree of controversy and/or interest surrounding the plan or project. A meeting likely to be well attended should involve a more comprehensive packet of materials;
- the size of the project;
- the nature of attendant studies; and
- whether the agency is preparing for a meeting or a hearing. A hearing generally involves a greater number of handouts. including some legally required and/or procedural documents.

1. Distribution

Handouts should always be distributed prior to the start of the meeting or hearing, so that people can review them in advance and be better prepared to participate. Handouts can be placed in an obvious spot near the entrance to the meeting room or they can be distributed to people as they arrive by an agency representative acting as a greeter. To be effective, handouts should never be merely placed on seats or tables in the meeting room.

Sometimes it is a good idea to include handout materials with the meeting/hearing invitation sent to groups and individuals on the mailing list. Even if this technique is used, the agency should always make sure that sufficient copies of the handout materials are available at the meeting site.

2. Clarification

At the beginning of every session, the meeting conductor or hearing officer should take a moment to itemize and discuss handout materials. Particular attention should be given to items such as maps and drawings that often need some clarification. Landmarks and other orientation points should be specifically noted. In addition, an explanation of scale and symbols is generally helpful. In referring to the overall packet, the conductor should explain what the handouts say, what they show, and how they relate to the agency presentation.

The remaining pages of this chapter highlight specific characteristics of the most popular types of meeting and hearing handouts. Whenever possible, discussion focuses on those elements that may significantly influence an agency's decision to select and prepare a particular type. Examples are included, as appropriate.

3. Maps and aerial photographs

Maps and aerial photographs are generally used to depict alternative alignments of a proposed corridor. While there are no rigid standards to follow in developing maps and aerials as handouts, the following general guidelines may be helpful:

- The base map should be ***clear, well-defined, and devoid of unnecessary details.*** In other words, lines of demarcation (municipal boundaries, in particular), local and county roads, railroads, streams, etc., should be kept to a minimum. How much "detail" should be eradicated and how much should be left in depends on the quality of the map (is there sufficient contrast?) and on the nature of the project itself (the number and lengths of alternatives, the number of municipalities and counties involved, etc.).

- In the case of an aerial, the photograph must be of ***good quality.***

- The map/aerial must be ***properly labeled.*** Each municipality and county should be identified, as should significant landmarks, buildings, roadways, bodies of water, etc. Different sizes of lettering should be used for each of the above categories. As much as possible, all lettering should be on the horizontal.

- The alternatives should be clearly differentiated. In an ideal situation, alternatives should be distinguished through the use of different colors. However, since color involves increased cost, a numbering or lettering system can be substituted. One warning: Unless the numbering/lettering is well planned and done with extreme care, the resulting map may be cluttered and hard to read.

- The map should include an appropriate, easily interpreted legend that incorporates the map's scale.
- The project should be identified by a bold title, followed by the name of the agency.
- At a minimum, the map/aerial should be 8½"x11" in size.

To illustrate the importance of some of these points, **Exhibits 4-1 and 4-2** show effective handout maps. The first graphically represents one of a series of possible alternatives for transportation development that includes both highway and transit options. However, lettering in the key at the bottom is small. The second is a clear, simple map of a project corridor, included as the major visual element on a comment form.

4. Project-related pamphlets and brochures

This category of handouts represents an effective means of communicating a good deal of information to the public in a compact, manageable format. The style, organization, and content of project brochures are totally individual matters. Agency resources, specific project details, meeting objectives, and special community characteristics all come into play. Effective brochures can be glossy, sophisticated, and professionally printed and bound. Or they can be simple 8- or 12-page documents that are written, designed, and compiled by agency staffers. However, all good brochures have certain elements in common. These include the following:

- They are written in a clear, concise manner suited to the intended audience.
- They are totally devoid of technical jargon and go to great lengths to explain technical terms in lay language.
- They utilize language that reflects a sincere effort to obtain and utilize community input. The letter included here as **Exhibit 4-3** is part of a brochure on a New England State's transit service planning study. It uses simple, direct language and invites the reader to further peruse the contents of the brochure.
- They include elements that encourage people to participate in the planning process. **Exhibit 4-4** shows the front cover of a three-panel brochure that features an attractive illustration and a catchy project slogan ("Lemmon Aid"). The entire brochure is printed in both Spanish and English and includes an area map and a simple, clear project schedule. The layout uses yellow and various shades of black and gray on a white, glossy background.

  Other agencies demonstrate the seriousness of their intent to consider community priorities and values by including rating sheets, questionnaires, and checklists in their brochures. Any provision for feedback—even a clip-out coupon that places the brochure recipient on a project mailing list—is seen as an inviting and encouraging gesture. The coupon in **Exhibit 4-5,** which was included in a brochure prepared by an eastern state, is a representative example:

Exhibit 4-1: SAMPLE HANDOUT MAP

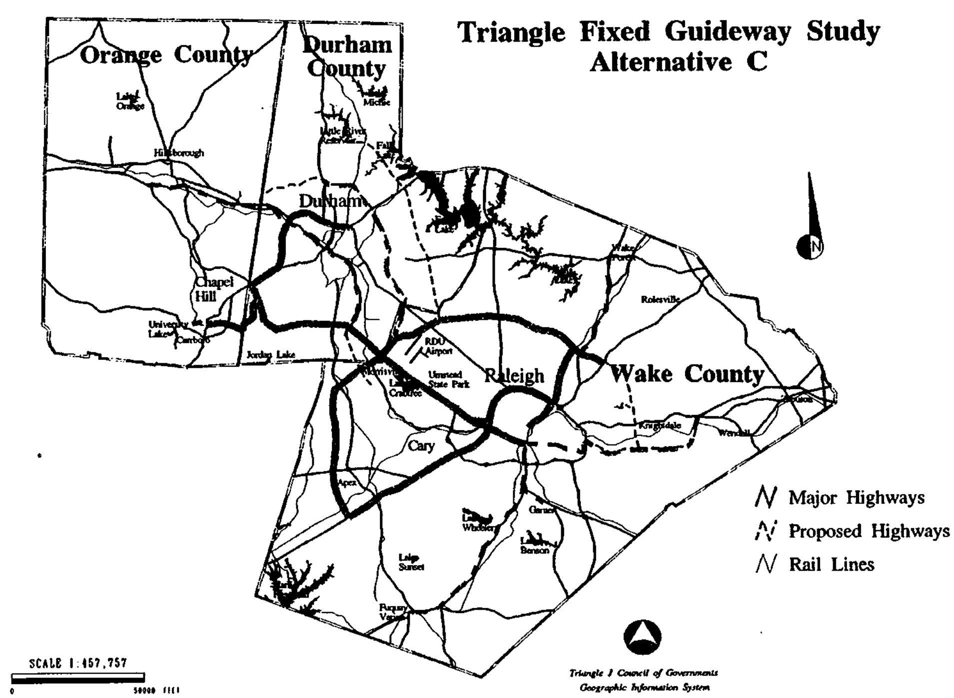


Exhibit 4-2: SAMPLE HANDOUT MAP

We want to know what you think.

Here are my comments...

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

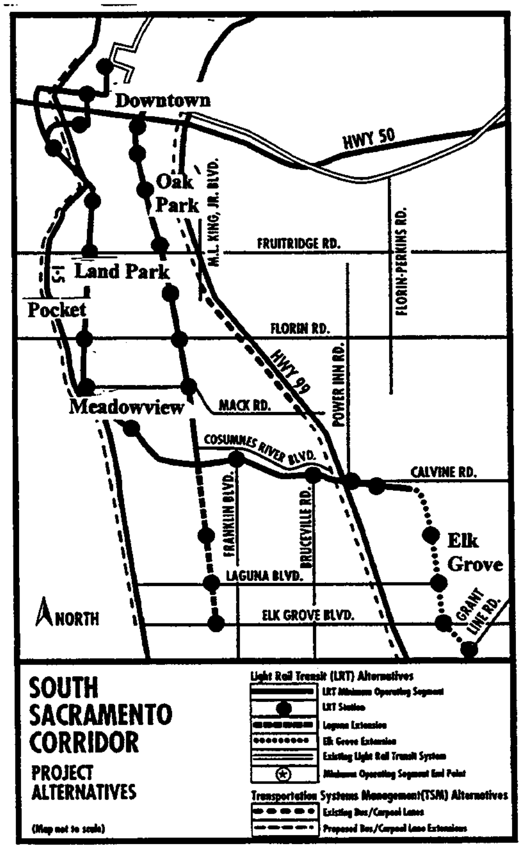
Name: ___________________________

Organization: ___________________________

Address: ___________________________

City: ______________ State: _____ Zip: _______

Phone (optional): ___________________________



Please submit your comments at the public hearing on October 24th or mail by November 14th to: Debra Jones, Senior Planner, Sacramento Regional Transit District, P.O. Box 2110, Sacramento, CA 95812-2110.

Regional Transit

Sacramento Regional Transit District
South Sacramento Transit Alternatives Project
P.O. Box 2110
Sacramento, CA 95812-2110

Exhibit 4-3: SAMPLE BROCHURE SECTION

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This is an exciting time for transportation in Chittenden County. We are planning for the 21st century and developing options that will serve our residents and businesses for decades to come. From the ongoing efforts on the Long-range Transportation Plan to developing passenger rail service, a lot is happening in this area. These proposals will identify our future needs and how to meet them in ways that minimize roadway congestion impacts on air quality.

The Burlington Area Tri-Center Study explained in this brochure is a highlight of our efforts. Beginning in 1992, we have been looking at various options for linking the downtowns of Burlington, South Burlington, and Winooski through the UVM/Medical Center area. The study is looking at three different options for improved transit connections between these points. The transit improvements would serve residents and visitors, connecting them with major activity centers such as Church Street Marketplace, Champlain Mills, University Mall, Burlington Square Mall, and the waterfront.

Work is now underway to evaluate the alternatives and compare them against each other for ridership, costs, and environmental and other impacts. We will identify station locations, roadway and traffic impacts of the Transportation System Management, High-occupancy Vehicle Lane, and Light Rail options.

Why are we looking at transit improvements? As Chittenden County continues to grow, so have our traffic problems. The impacts of expanding local streets and major roadways are significant. There is no available land, and yet the number of automobile trips being made in this area is increasing every year. We can improve the ability of our existing roads to carry more people if we look at transit solutions that provide convenient and efficient service.

I am sure you will agree that we all want to keep Chittenden County a great place to live, with new businesses coming here and existing businesses expanding, particularly if we can avoid having clogged roads and polluted air. We want to see more tourists come and enjoy what we all love about Vermont. But we need to provide the types of services that help foster growth and prosperity while offering all of us the ability to get from place to place efficiently without increasing traffic congestion throughout the region.

Please look at this brochure and learn about new transit options for Chittenden County. I hope you will become involved in this effort, participate at public meetings, and let us know your suggestions and concerns. You are invited to call our community representative at 658-3004 if you have any questions or want to be put on our mailing list.

Sincerely,

Patrick Garahan
Secretary of Transportation

Exhibit 4-4: SAMPLE BROCHURE

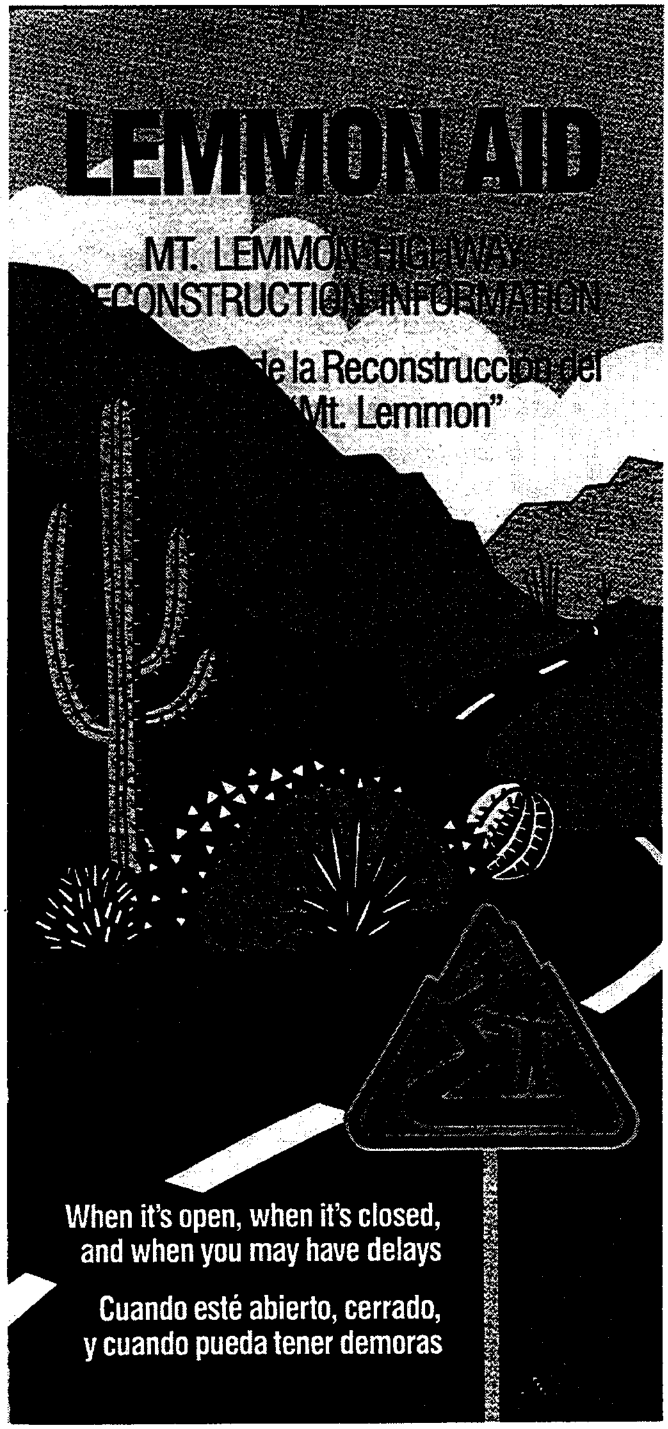


Exhibit 4-5: SAMPLE RETURN COUPON

SOUTHERN TIER EXPRESSWAY
STUDY COMMUNITY RESPONSE

YES, I would like to participate in the study for the Southern Tier Expressway, as follows (check those desired):

______Participate at public meetings and public hearings

______Serve on a committee

______Speaker for my organization:
Name: ________________

______Be included on mailing list for publications and meeting notices

Please list names and addresses of others you think would want to receive this brochure and possibly become involved:

Name ________________	Your Name ________________
Address ________________	Address ________________
City ________________	City ________________
State, Zip ________________	State, Zip ________________
Phone ________________	Phone ________________

- They provide enough project data to enable recipients to evaluate the situation and to intelligently participate in the meeting or hearing.
- They clearly describe and delineate all options under consideration. **Exhibit 4-6**, reproduced here in a reduced size, illustrates this principle.
- They include an indication of project schedule and overall time frames.
- They provide clear self-explanatory project maps. **Exhibit 4-6** includes three such maps. The maps are larger in the original format.
- They include simple, relevant charts and graphs.
- They are carefully laid out to provide a maximum of information with a minimum of verbiage. Graphics, charts, and white space are generously and effectively used.

COVERS CAN BE A BONUS

A simple yet sophisticated and stylish cover can add an exciting finish to a good brochure. The cover is a good place for a simple, informative graphic like a map.

5. General pamphlets and brochures

Specific project- or plan-related data is always more relevant if presented within the context of the overall transportation planning and project development process. An explanation of Federal and State regulations, environmental guidelines, and right-of-way policies and procedures is essential to a thorough understanding of the engineering, fiscal, and time components of the planning or project development cycle.

Handouts are, of course, a particularly effective means of rounding out the information presented at a meeting. Consequently, right-of-way and relocation brochures and "umbrella" pamphlets that describe the process by which a concept becomes a road are some of the documents that agencies increasingly include in handout packets.

6. Right-of-way brochures

Perhaps the one issue to which the general public can relate more than any other in terms of transportation facility development is that of right-of-way. This is particularly true of those people who reside within or near the corridor of a proposed highway or rail line. The average citizen views the impacts of such proposals in terms of land required, homes to be taken, and residents to be relocated. The purposes and methodologies of feasibility studies, environmental assessments, and alternatives evaluation often become of secondary significance in this regard. The most

Exhibit 4-6: PROJECT ALTERNATIVES TEXT AND MAPS

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission are undertaking a study to identify public transportation improvements which will serve people traveling between downtown Burlington, South Burlington, and Winooski. As congestion keeps growing and air quality becomes affected by stop-and-go driving, it becomes clear that local roads and Chittenden County's environment cannot support unlimited single occupant vehicle travel.

The purpose of this study is to identify an approach to making public transportation more efficient and convenient, thus attracting more shoppers, commuters, students, and others out of their cars and into transit. There are three options under consideration. Two of these improvements are designed to allow Chittenden County Transit Authority's (CCTA) bus system to work more efficiently. The third is a completely new light rail transit system. All of the alternatives link up to an existing park and ride lot behind the Sheraton hotel, additional park and ride facilities in South Burlington and Winooski, and a major proposed park and ride lot near Lakeside Avenue, south of downtown.

These alternatives are:

Transportation System Management (TSM)

Changes to the transit system that improve service are called Transportation System Management. This option for the Tri-Center Study looks at ways to make better use of the transit system that the Burlington area already has, and make adjustments that will increase ridership and provide a more convenient and efficient trip on public transportation.

These improvements can include changes in routings and increasing the number of buses on routes, to reduce the time between buses. Locations for enhanced transit service in Burlington have been identified along College Street, through the UVM campus, along East Avenue and Colchester Avenue to include a new Transit Center in Winooski, and along Williston Road to a new Transit Center in South Burlington.

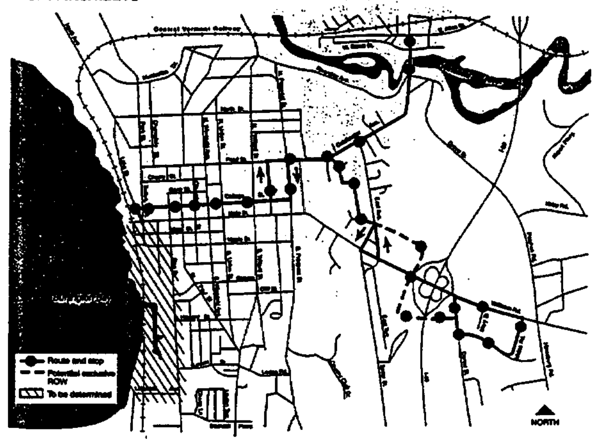
High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV)

Another way to move buses faster and more efficiently is to provide special dedicated lanes on local roadways where only buses or carpools are permitted. Such buses and carpools are called high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs). This study is looking at dedicating an existing traffic lane for exclusive use by buses and carpools during rush hours. The special bus/carpool lanes would move people in and out of downtown Burlington and to Winooski along Pearl Street and Colchester Avenue, and to South Burlington via Main Street and Williston Road during rush hours. During the rest of the day, all traffic could use the lanes on the streets shown.

Light Rail Transit (LRT)

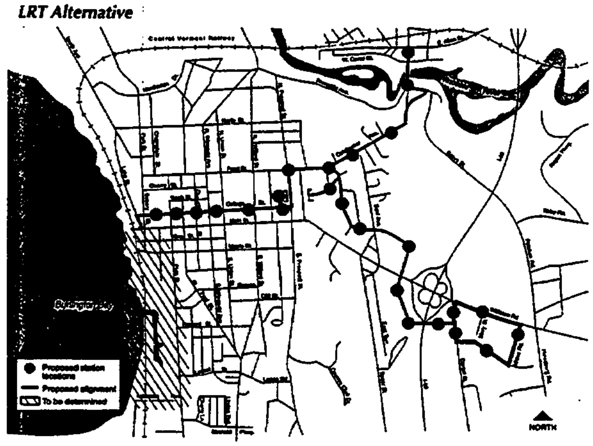
Trolleys used to be a major part of Chittenden County's transporetion service. The LRT option looks at providing a new fixed-rail service along College Street, branching off through the University along Colchester Avenue to Winooski or down across Williston Road to the Dorset Street area in South Burlington. Stops will be located every few blocks, and will serve major locations such as the University campus, downtown Winooski, and South Burlington shopping areas.

TSM Alternative



HOV Alternative

LRT Alternative



prevalent questions are "To what degree will I be affected?" and "What procedures and time frame does the agency follow in acquiring property and relocating people?"

Per Federal Highway Administration requirements, State transportation agencies are obliged to provide the general public with information on right-of-way and relocation policies and procedures at public hearings. However, most agencies realize that a productive public involvement program necessitates dissemination of this information much earlier in the planning or project development cycle.

A popular and effective means of informing the public of right-of-way and relocation practices is distribution of booklets and brochures. These may be used as handouts at public meetings, information centers, and hearings, or they can be mailed to residents and business people at any point in the planning process.

7. Forms for audience use

Distributing a variety of "audience participation" forms is probably the most simple, inexpensive, and effective way to obtain data essential for agency follow-up and evaluation. In addition, registration cards, speakers' cards, comment cards, meeting evaluation forms, and questionnaires contribute to the informality of a meeting by providing people who are reluctant to speak in public with an opportunity to anonymously express their opinions.

In developing your forms, the most essential element is to clearly define the types of information you wish to receive. For example:

- If your principal purpose in distributing registration cards is to update your mailing list, determine whether names and addresses are sufficient data or whether group affiliation, title, etc., might also be helpful.
- If you are planning a questionnaire solely to evaluate the effectiveness of your notification procedures, do not include extraneous questions about audiovisual aids, handouts, etc.
- If you are preparing speakers' cards, do not ask people to indicate whether they are in favor of or opposed to the project.

In all cases, pare down your list so that you focus clearly and exclusively on the major salient points.

Exhibit 4-7 shows examples of both a simple speakers' card that is easy to produce and distribute and a multi-purpose registration card. The latter can be used to update the agency mailing list, pinpoint the most effective notification techniques for the particular project, and determine the source and degree of continuity of interest in the project.

Exhibit 4-8 is a comprehensive questionnaire designed to evaluate a variety of notification techniques, the effectiveness of the agency presentation, and the hearing as a whole. Its concept and format are quite effective, and the question-

Exhibit 4-7: SPEAKERS' AND REGISTRATION CARDS

SPEAKERS' CARD

PLEASE PRINT.

I desire to make a statement at this public hearing.

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

CITY ____________ STATE ______ ZIP CODE ____________

REGISTRATION CARD

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

CITY ____________ STATE ______ ZIP CODE ____________

How did you find out about the meeting?

What prompted you to come to the meeting?

Exhibit 4-8: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I became aware of this hearing through (Please check all items that apply.):
   ___ legal ad in the classified section of your newspaper
   ___ newspaper article
   ___ letter from the Department to you as a property owner
   ___ legal notice sent to your place of business
   ___ radio—please identify station: ______________________________
   ___ television—please identify station: ______________________________
   ___ poster
   ___ other—please identify: ______________________________

2. The audiovisual presentation was:
   ___ both interesting and informative ___ interesting but not informative
   ___ informative but dull ___ neither interesting nor informative
   ___ no opinion

3. Based on my knowledge of the area, the audiovisual presentation was:
   ___ accurate ___ inaccurate ___ no opinion

4. The audiovisual presentation:
   ___ fully explained the alternatives ___ left too many questions unanswered
   ___ no opinion

5. The audiovisual presentation was:
   ___ easy to understand ___ difficult to understand ___ no opinion

6. I suggest the following improvements to the audiovisual presentation:
   ____

7. I would rate the effectiveness of this meeting as a way of presenting information to the public:
   ___ very effective ___ ineffective ___ partially effective
   ___ effective ___ very ineffective

8. I would suggest the following changes to improve these public hearings:
   ____
   ____

9. I have lived in the area ________ years.

10. I ___ have ___ have not attended a DOT public hearing before.

naire is generally well executed.

QUESTIONNAIRES ARE TIME-CONSUMING

Before embarking on questionnaire planning, remember that preparation, tabulation, and overall analysis and evaluation of results are time-consuming activities. Be sure to carefully examine your available resources to determine if the questionnaire option is really feasible.

Several agencies are developing effective handout packets by combining forms for audience use with a variety of pamphlets and brochures. A fine example is the workshop packet prepared by a Middle Atlantic state for a major highway improvement. The packet included a workshop registration card, a questionnaire, and a group discussion guide, as well as a booklet containing agenda, project history and description, and maps and drawings. The audience participation items are included as **Exhibits 4-9 through 4-11.**

A FINAL WORD ON QUESTIONNAIRES

The effectiveness of a questionnaire is equally dependent on content and time of distribution. For example, if the purpose of your questionnaire is to obtain input prior to paring down the number of alternatives under consideration, the form must be distributed at an early project meeting. Attempting to obtain this information at a workshop, meeting, or hearing held at a later stage would neither appear to be a serious gesture nor significantly contribute to the planning or project development process. You would be better off without any questionnaire at all!

8. Charts and tables

Charts and tables are simple, cost- and labor-effective techniques for presenting large amounts of significant data. Although they can be compiled at almost any point in planning or project development, they are generally distributed at meetings held late in the process, when information generated by ongoing planning, engineering and environmental studies is relatively complete.

More often than not, charts and tables are used to compare alternatives that have been developed for a specific proposal. **Exhibits 4-12 and 4-13** are typical examples. Note how the logos in 4-12 make it visually more appealing.

In developing an overall handout concept, remember that tables and charts are self-explanatory documents that reveal the relative effects of a proposal in a straightforward, easily understood fashion. In addition, their production requires only minimal cost and people-hours. Project-related data that has already been compiled

Exhibit 4-9: WORKSHOP REGISTRATION CARD

PUBLIC WORKSHOP REGISTRATION

L.R. 1061, Section H14
Traffic Route 220
Tyrone to Milesburg

NAME ______________________________

ADDRESS ______________________________

CITY ______________ STATE ______ ZIP CODE ______________

PHONE ______________________________

REPRESENTING (club or organization): ______________________________

How did you hear about this workshop?

___ newspaper ___ mailed invitation ___ radio

___ television ___ word of mouth

Would you like to be notified of future workshops, public meetings, and public hearings? ___ yes ___ no

Indicate which workshop you attended:
___ Wingate ___ Port Matilda

Exhibit 4-10: CITIZEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Centre, Blair, & Huntingdon Counties
L.R. 1061, Section H14
Traffic Route 220

Public Meetings
April 13 & 14, 19___

1. Where do you live?
   ___ Tyrone ___ Port Matilda ___ Julian
   ___ Unionville ___ Milesburg ___ Stormstown
   ___ Snyder Township ___ Taylor Township ___ Worth Township
   ___ Half Moon Township ___ Huston Township ___ Patton Township
   ___ Union Township ___ Boggs Township
   ___ Other (please specify) ___
2. How long have you lived at your present address? ___
3. Do you own your home? ___ yes ___ no
4. Where do you work (borough, township, etc.)? ___
5. What is your occupation? ___
6. Do you own or operate a business within the corridor of the new highway? ___ yes ___ no
7. Would you use the new highway to go to work? ___ yes ___ no
8. Would you use the new highway to go shopping? ___ yes ___ no
9. Which of the alternatives presented tonight do you favor?
   ___ Mountaintop ___ Mountainside ___ Valley ___ No Build
   Why? ___
10. Which of the alternatives presented tonight to you feel has the fewest advantages?
    ___ Mountaintop ___ Mountainside ___ Valley ___ No Build
    Why? ___
11. What do you think are the benefits to be derived from relocation of Traffic Route 220?
    ___
    ___
12. What do you think are the adverse effects of relocating Traffic Route 220?
    ___
    ___
13. Overall, how would you rate tonight's workshop format and agenda?
    ___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor
    Comment: ___
    ___
14. If you have specific comments or concerns not addressed at tonight's meeting or by this questionnaire, please list them on the back.
    ___

Exhibit 4-11: GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

WELCOME!

This guide will explain how to participate in tonight's workshop. This is an informational workshop during which we will use a group discussion method known as "brainstorming" to exchange ideas and generate valuable input.

Various people are available to help you with information and answer your questions. They are from PennDOT as well as from the consulting firm of Michael Baker, Jr., Inc., and are wearing name tags for easy identification.

THE PURPOSE

Several alternatives are under consideration for this section of the Appalachian Thruway as it crosses portions of Blair, Huntingdon, and Centre counties. We need to find a design and a location that will minimize harm to the environment and still provide your area with better, safer transportation. To help us understand your communities and your concerns and hopes regarding this transportation issue, we are presenting two questions for consideration and discussion.

THE PROCEDURE

Each group should first choose a recorder. Your group will brainstorm, discuss, and then prioritize the two discussion questions. As you brainstorm, the recorder should write down everyone's ideas on the large sheets of paper provided. A facilitator will help you get started. Be as creative and open with your ideas as you would like.

These are the **rules for brainstorming** the questions:
1. Get out everyone's ideas and list them quickly.
2. Don't discuss or comment while brainstorming. Discussion comes later.
3. Repetition is okay.
4. Work as fast as you can.

The **recorder** should:
1. Record all ideas.
2. Record in short phrases or sentences.
3. Paraphrase.
4. Not censor.
5. Keep the group with him/her. Slow them down, if necessary.
6. Make the record visible to the whole group.

QUESTION 1: CONDITIONS TODAY

What existing conditions in your area are so important that they should not be changed or disrupted by any major transportation construction?

Think for a moment about life in your community and the surrounding area. What do you like most about living there? What don't you want to see changed?

Then: **Brainstorm** a long list of the most important things in your community (buildings, natural resources, etc.). The recorder should write these down. Be as specific as you can.

Discuss the list. Give your reasons for listing items and compare ideas on what's more important.

Prioritize the list. Each person should vote for five items she or he thinks are most important.

Record the items with the most votes and list them in priority order.

Exhibit 4-12: TABLE OF ALTERNATIVES

NETI Transportation Alternative Scenarios by Mode

MODE	I - CURRENT POLICIES	II - MODERATE CHANGE	III - MAJOR CHANGE
Highways	• Inadequate system preservation funding • Limited capacity expansion approved on individual basis	• Improved system preservation funding • Capacity expansion based on defined criteria consistent with other policies	• Full system preservation funding • Capacity expansion primarily for intermodal connections and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) facilities
Trucking	• Modest IVHS implementation and regulatory standardization • Increasing dominance of freight markets	• Full IVHS and regulatory standardization • Some shifts of long-haul markets to rail • Improved intermodal coord. • Enhanced clean/alternative fuel programs • Improved technology	• Full IVHS for personal vehicle market • Major investment shifts to multimodal strategies
Intercity Bus	• Continued rural abandonment or transfer to public operation • Some urban growth due to HOV facilities • Conversion to rail feeder services	• Enhancement of rural services • More extensive urban HOV facilities • Greater conversion to rail feeder services	• Fully integrated intermodal system
Passenger Rail	• Northeast corridor improvements • Boston to Portland completed • Limited commuter rail expansion • Limited tourist expansions	• Additional new intercity and commuter services • Some recreational expansion & improved schedule coord. • Enhanced New England connectivity	• Major commitment to High Speed Ground Transportation • Intermodal recreational system and intermodal
Freight Rail	• Limited double-stack improvements • Increase in waste and hazardous materials hauling	• More double-stack improvements • Increased share of long-haul market and intermodal truck coordination	• Major shift to intermodal system
Airports	• Continued delays and increasing congestion at Logan • Conversion to smaller planes on some feeder services	• Regional system with intermediate services shifted to second-tier airports • Fare equity across the system	• Intermediate services shifted to High Speed Ground Transportation
Ports	• Individual port planning and investment • Increasing external competition • Minor changes in ferry services	• Coordinated port planning and investment • Meet challenge of external competition • More freight-related ferry services	• Centralized port planning and investment • Meet challenge of external competition • Increase in ferry services

Exhibit 4-13: TABLE

ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION & RIGHT-OF-WAY COSTS						
Alignment	**Length (miles)**	**Buildings Taken**		**Cost (millions)**		
		Res.	**Comm.**	**Const.**	**R.O.W.**	**Total**
Original	5.04	0	0	$30.7	$4.2	**$34.9**
Modified interchanges	5.04	0	0	$31.7	$4.2	**$35.9**
Well Field	5.54	27	3	$34.6	$7.6	**$42.2**
Ridge	5.62	80	1	$49.3	$10.9	**$60.2**
Valley	5.05	1	0	$32.2	$5.5	**$37.7**
Tunnel & cut & cover	5.04	8	0	$253.2	$3.2	**$256.4**
Cut & cover	5.04	8	0	$212.7	$3.2	**$215.9**
Ridge & hospital bypass	6.37	95	1	$56.8	$12.5	**$69.3**
Original & hospital bypass	5.79	15	0	$38.2	$6.1	**$44.3**
South of the park	6.88	77	1	$64.5	$26.0	**$90.5**

9. Photographs and sketches

A few transportation agencies distribute conceptual photographs and/or sketches of the "completed" project as part of their handout packets. One southern state, for example, provides 8½"x11" glossies that show the proposed project superimposed on a 35mm aerial photograph of the existing area. The "new construction" is air-brushed onto the aerial to produce a tangible and "realistic" view of the project under discussion.

Artists' renderings or computer simulations are effective ways to help people visualize how a project might look after construction or implementation. The artist's rendering included here as **Exhibit 4-14** provides an attractive visualization of the effects of one phase of a regional transit authority's proposed fixed guideway transit line on land use in the surrounding community.

In deciding whether to use artists' renderings or simulations, consider a number of factors in addition to cost and necessary expertise. Most significant is the potential danger of distributing a realistic picture of a concept that may be substantially different from the eventual construction. Photographs in particular are regarded as true representations of fact; it may be difficult to convince people otherwise.

As a general rule, renderings should never be distributed without an attached explanation of their purpose and conceptual nature. In addition, whenever photographs or sketches are used as handout materials, they should be referred to and described as part of the official agency presentation.

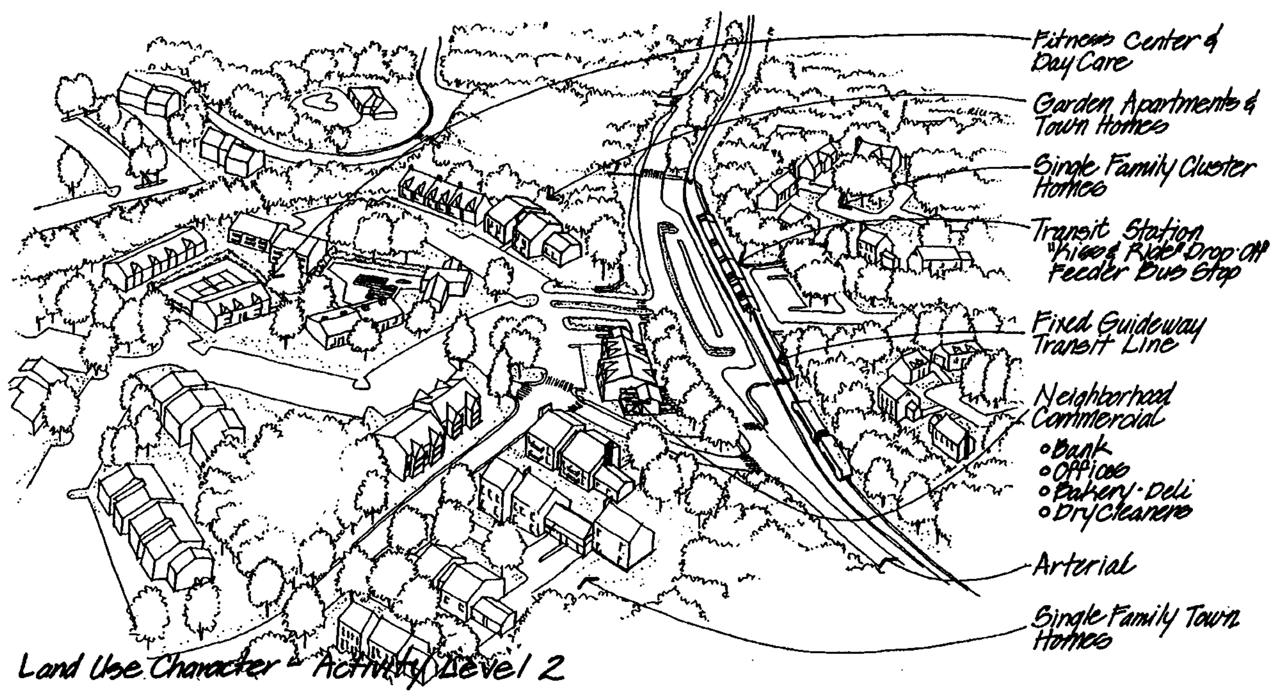
10. Position papers and summary reports

If resources permit, preparation of a synopsis or summary report of critical issues can add a good deal of substance to your handout packet. Position papers and summary reports are particularly effective techniques for distilling large amounts of technical information, providing an overview of major project components, and describing and comparing potential project impacts.

In discussions of controversial issues, they can present the case for a variety of positions, outline alternative courses of action, and discuss their relative implications. Meeting participants are therefore given the opportunity to review a comprehensive and objective account of potential tradeoffs and their advantages and disadvantages.

Preparation of position papers should follow the same guidelines suggested for preparation of agency presentations and other technically based documents. (A detailed discussion of these guidelines begins on **page 37**.) Most importantly, try to develop a team approach and give yourself ample time for review and revision.

Exhibit 4-14: ARTIST'S RENDERING



Chapter 5: GRAPHICS, AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS, & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

An effective audio-visual aid is undoubtedly the single most important factor in determining the success of any given meeting or hearing. As an independently perceived representation of a project, it often becomes the individual community member's dominant and somewhat subjective recollection of the proposed facility.

Studies have shown that clear, attractive, and self-explanatory audio-visuals can enhance a meeting by creating a baseline of common interest and understanding. Conversely, a poorly executed, confusing, or inappropriate audio-visual can be a source of disharmony and mistrustfulness. Careful selection, preparation, and display of graphic and other audio-visual materials is therefore of central importance in planning an effective meeting or hearing. If your agency develops a strong reputation for making visual presentations that communicate concepts clearly and simply, this can help boost citizen interest and meeting attendance.

Throughout this chapter the term audio-visual aids is used to describe a wide range of presentation techniques. These include the following categories:

1. Slide presentations
2. Impulse tape presentations
3. Aerial exhibits
4. Models
5. Artists' renderings
6. Charts, graphs, and tables
7. Taped presentations
8. Films
9. Videotapes
10. Photomontage
11. Computer simulations
12. Interactive television and video displays and kiosks

The most popularly used audio-visuals are categories 1-4, which are commonly used as the primary presentation technique. Categories 5-7 generally serve as supplementary measures. Categories 8-10 are specialized applications that are less frequently used at meetings and hearings, while categories 11 and 12 are becoming more prevalent as the technology develops and more and more people are learning how to deal with simple transactions on computer.

BASIC GUIDELINES

Although the selection of a specific audio-visual technique, of course, depends on a multitude of agency, community, and project components, all effective audio-visuals share a number of common elements:

- ***They suit the audience for which they are intended.*** To be meaningful, a graphic presentation must be specifically geared to the needs and comprehension level of its intended audience. In most cases, thorough familiarity with the characteristics of your targeted community will be your best guide.

For example, if you are dealing with a sophisticated group that has been involved in project planning, a detailed slide-tape presentation or free-standing exhibit that includes comparative charts and graphs would probably be acceptable. However, if you plan to meet with a group that includes a substantial number of non-English-speaking people, a visual presentation that does not depend on verbal explanation would be more appropriate. A scale model or clearly taped and labeled aerial mosaics are two possibilities.

- ***They are specifically geared to the subject or point being made.*** In selecting and developing audio-visual aids, it is important to focus solely on the topic under consideration. Contrary to the opinion of some agencies, an audience is not impressed by a potpourri of extraneous exhibits that relate to all aspects of a project proposal. The result of this type of overkill is more likely to be confusion, distress, and reduced agency credibility.

  Two examples:

  1. A southeastern state included an artist's rendering of the proposed renovation of a recreational facility at a meeting to discuss noise impacts. Since the parkland acquisition was a major point of controversy of the project, the original purpose of the meeting was totally obscured. *Remember:* If you are preparing for a noise impact meeting, concentrate on developing appropriate audio-tapes, models, or artists' renderings of attenuation measures.

  2. Several States have developed elaborate free-standing exhibits and slide shows depicting the range of notification techniques. Since these audio-visuals "fill up" a good deal of space and/or meeting time, the overall impression is that the agency had little of substance to present. *Remember:* Instead of taking time to prepare "notification exhibits," focus on properly preparing and extensively distributing a variety of notification documents.

- ***They enhance a technical presentation and illustrate the narrative material being presented.*** Audio-visuals should never be used in isolation but as a technique to enrich the presentation of basic technical project data. Consequently, they should never represent a comprehensive perspective of the meeting or attempt to cover each and every project detail. In preparing audio-visual aids, it is therefore important to approach them as the supporting background rather than as the focus of your presentation.

- ***They are as self-explanatory as possible.*** Although audio-visuals are not the focus of a presentation, they should be understandable without a narrative description or explanation. An exhibit should always be comprehensible to community people, even in the absence of an agency "translator."

  Of course, certain exhibits are more inherently self-explanatory than others. A scale model that clearly shows the relationship of a proposed roadway to houses in the area is an example of an almost perfectly independent display.

At the other extreme, flow charts and detailed color-coded construction schedules are often difficult to interpret without assistance.

- ***They are simple, clear, informative, and never cute.*** In mapping out individual components, keep in mind that graphics should be designed to inform, illuminate, and serve as a catalyst for obtaining constructive public input. Although an innovative presentation of plan or project data is always refreshing, audio-visuals are not intended primarily to entertain or to win a prize for creativity.

SELECTION

In selecting appropriate audio-visuals for a meeting, internal agency factors are as important as overall guidelines and criteria. Once you have determined that a specific technique is the best way to illustrate a particular point, the next step is to determine whether agency resources permit its development. *Remember:* A simple, professional-looking audio-visual is always more effective than a poorly executed attempt to construct an elaborate display.

With this dictum in mind, it is a good idea to realistically evaluate your resources and constraints. Particular attention should be given to the following:

1. Expertise

It is not surprising that some agencies always present slide-tape shows, while others generally develop an aerial mosaic exhibit. In most cases, these tendencies do not reflect a lack of creativity but rather a sensible approach to maximizing the use of existing personnel resources.

Given most transportation agencies' restrictions on hiring and training writers, artists, photographers, film-makers, and model-makers, it is unlikely that any public involvement staff includes a full complement of audio-visual talent. On the other hand, an agency-wide search is likely to turn up a number of semi-professionals or experienced amateurs in such areas as photography, art, graphic design, or writing. Don't overlook these people when you inventory your in-house expertise!

Of course, selecting an outside consultant is sometimes an excellent way to produce a professional audio-visual program. Unfortunately, this is not always a viable option, due to associated costs and the time required to negotiate and finalize the appropriate contracts. In most cases, it is not advisable to tack an audio-visual component onto an existing consultant contract. Few engineering and environmental firms have the expertise needed to produce such presentation items as a film or a slide-tape program. In all instances, it is important to carefully screen your potential consultants before making a decision.

BE CONSERVATIVE

Meeting or hearing preparation is never the time to experiment with a new audio-visual or untried talent. Nor is it an appropriate opportunity to train a budding film-maker or artist in your agency. Expanding your in-house capabilities should always be part of a long-range program—never a shotgun approach to a specific meeting.

2. Budget

The costs of preparing and presenting any audio-visual aid are variable, depending on the degree to which necessary materials and equipment are already available within an agency. Consequently, the decision to produce computer-generated overhead presentations or slide shows may be a costly one if cameras, projectors, etc., must be rented or software purchased, or a relatively inexpensive one if the necessary equipment is already in-house.

In selecting a specific audio-visual, it is therefore important to consider relative as well as absolute cost factors. These can often be reduced by carefully surveying your agency's existing equipment and material resources. With a bit of ingenuity, you may find that your print, woodwork, machine, and electrical shops can supply many of your needs and help you cut costs. The computer expertise of staff in Information Systems or other divisions can also be a great help.

For example, one agency that regularly produces slide-tape presentations reported that it turned to its maintenance division when it needed a stand. By building an appropriate table, the maintenance unit reduced the cost of the stand to that of purchasing two pieces of plexiglass and a rack and pinion.

Another agency in effect created the basis for its audio-visual program by extensively tapping the following internal resources:

Machine shop	—	aluminum easels for graphic displays
Woodworking shop	—	podium, storage cabinet, pointer, tables for constructing and displaying models
Sign shop	—	portable public meeting and hearing signs, lettering for graphic displays
Electrical shop	—	patch cords for public address system (used to hook up a noise exhibit at a public hearing)
Maintenance shop	—	extension cords, tools

Of course, some audio-visual aids are inherently expensive. Film-making is a costly art, and model-making is labor-intensive—often to the point of being prohibitive. Computer simulations are also at the high end of the scale in terms of both costs and expertise needed. These types of audio-visuals should not be considered unless it has been clearly demonstrated that they meet the desired objective far more effectively than any alternative means.

3. Time frame

The decision to select a specific audio-visual aid is often "predetermined" by the amount of available time prior to the meeting or hearing. Although thorough preparation of any audio-visual is a time-consuming activity, some techniques require considerably more preparation time than others. The following suggested guidelines should therefore be kept in mind before narrowing down your list of options:

Charts, graphs, and tables—Most can be prepared in two weeks using old-fashioned methods or a few minutes on computer if you have the data ready at hand.

Slide and impulse tape presentations—A minimum of four weeks for script writing, photography, editing, and processing.

Aerial displays—A minimum of six weeks for preparation and revisions, once the aerial has been flown. *Remember:* Aerials must be flown during the late fall, winter, or early spring when there is no foliage to obscure the perspective. Therefore, it is generally a good idea to fly an area many months before starting actual exhibit preparation. This will assure that there is ample time to refly the area if the first aerial is unacceptable.

Films—A minimum of four months for script preparation, shooting, editing, and printing.

Scale models—A minimum of six months for all phases of preparation.

Computer simulations and interactive displays—A minimum of six months for all phases of preparation.

In addition to actual preparation time, an audio-visual schedule should always include adequate lead time for delivery of equipment and materials and for necessary additions and revisions.

PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION

Recognizing that the selection of audio-visual aids is always subject to factors external to the project itself, we provide the following descriptions of the most universally applicable techniques. Each is discussed in terms of methodology, appropriate usage, and relative advantages and disadvantages, as they relate to cost, personnel, training, and time factors.

1. Aerial exhibits

Although the term exhibit refers to any relatively large graphic display prepared by an agency for presentation at a public meeting or hearing, most agencies concentrate on preparation of exhibits that depict a number of proposed alternatives. To achieve their purpose of providing the public with a visual representation of the paths and impacts of each proposed alignment, these exhibits must be accurate, clear, of proper size (scale), and as self-explanatory as possible.

Although several types of bases can be used for an alternatives display (e.g., aerial, topographic maps, geodetic maps), aerials are preferred, particularly for public hearings, because they are much easier for a lay person to understand. If an aerial was not used at pre-hearing community meetings, it is a good idea to develop one for the public hearing. Aerial photographic services can provide the mosaic, and either in-house graphics people or a consultant can create the finished product.

Special time factors—Generally speaking, after an acceptable photograph has been obtained, preparation of an aerial exhibit requires at least six weeks. Because of the variables involved in producing a usable photo, the following factors should be kept in mind when developing your overall timetable:

1. As previously mentioned, aerials should always be flown in late fall, winter, or early spring, so that the vista is not obscured by foliage. However, winter often presents additional problems, since a snow-covered area is, of course, unacceptable for aerial photography. Proper timing and a bit of luck are crucial.

2. If your region is susceptible to periods of prolonged rain and cloudiness, make sure the project area is shot before the inclement weather sets in.

3. If the quality of the original aerial is not up to your standards, you might want to have the project area flown a second time. Remember that this will not only increase your total cost; it will also eat up a significant amount of time.

Preparation—An aerial should be properly mounted as soon as it is acquired. The advantages of doing so are that:

1. The finished exhibit can be more easily displayed at the meeting or hearing (i.e., it can be propped up via easels or left free-standing); and

2. There is less likelihood of rapid disintegration through constant handling and transportation.

In selecting a backing on which to mount the aerial, it is generally suggested that cardboard (inexpensive but frail and easily damaged) and plywood (durable but heavy and unwieldy) be avoided. A more acceptable alternative would be foam board (sandwich board), which is sturdy, durable, extremely light, and easy to handle. A 4'x8' piece of foam board is a good size for an exhibit.

MOUNTING THE EXHIBIT

When mounting an exhibit, glue is always preferable to tacks or tape. It not only results in a more professional-looking exhibit but also decreases the likelihood of damage during transport or storage. At least one State has developed a rather innovative technique, by which a waxy substance is spread across the backing, the aerial placed on top, and a steam press used to attach the two.

Once the base has been properly mounted, you can "doctor" it into a finished product. As you proceed, remember that an exhibit should be as self-explanatory as possible. People should be able to understand the exhibit and orient themselves without assistance. To accomplish this, focus on distinctively differentiating your alternatives and properly identifying government jurisdictions, landmarks, roadways, and natural features. The following tips may help:

- If at all possible, keep all your lettering on the horizontal.
- Use different-sized lettering for municipalities, counties, landmarks, roadways, and transit lines.
- If you are using a black and white photo, place your lettering in white blocks to create a sharp contrast with the aerial.
- Avoid placing your lettering on blocks directly over the feature you are identifying. Instead, set your lettering off to one side and pinpoint the feature via an arrow. Some agencies find it helpful to leave adequate margins between the sides of the aerial and the edge of the backing. It is then possible to place several or all of the letter blocks in the margins and extend arrows to the points of interest. This prevents the aerial from appearing messy or congested, even if a large number of features are being identified.
- Always include a title block, preferably on the lower portion of the exhibit, away from the alternatives. It should include the name of the project; the name of the agency (and consultant, if appropriate); the date of the meeting or hearing; a key to identify the alternatives, if appropriate; and the scale of the aerial.
- Place a north arrow in an appropriate area.
- Use Zipatone or a transparent tape to delineate the alternatives. This will allow people to see what is in the path of each proposed alignment and, consequently, to identify any potential impacts.
- Use different colors to differentiate among alternatives. Colors affect people both physically and psychologically. Consider, for instance, the following:

Physical effects

1. Green and blue are the easiest colors to see.

2. Red, orange, and other bright colors can create eye strain after a time, as can high-contrast, black-and-white presentations.

3. Using too many colors on the same exhibit creates mental strain, which can distract the viewer.

Psychological effects

1. Red is exciting, stimulating, or hostile. It is also sometimes interpreted as meaning that a particular alternative is no longer under active consideration. Similarly, green is sometimes interpreted as meaning that the agency has already decided to "go" ahead with that alternative.

2. Blue is serene, tender, and peaceful.

3. Orange is distressing or upsetting.

4. Black is melancholy or powerful.

- Delineate bodies of water by either outlining them or coloring them all in blue.

- Delineate park and recreation lands with green cross-hatching.

BEWARE OF OVERLAYS

Transparent acetate overlays are sometimes used so that alternatives can be shown one at a time. However, acetate reflects light easily, and the glare sometimes makes it difficult for the audience to see the exhibit. Also, reflecting light can cause problems when photographing the exhibit.

Most art supply stores have the kinds of materials you will need to develop your exhibit. Pressure-sensitive tapes and rub-off lettering are generally used to color exhibits, delineate significant features, and label points of interest. Zipatone, Chart-pak, Formatt, and Letraset are among the more popular brand names.

A number of States report that they use stencils or the Leroy technique instead of self-adhesive lettering. Both require additional effort and skill. The Leroy method also requires special equipment. Of course, a cutting device, straight edge, and pencil are standard equipment that should always be available.

Related costs—The cost of developing an aerial exhibit varies considerably and can range from a couple of hundred dollars to several thousand. Key factors, of course, include size and complexity of the exhibit and whether the preparation is done in-house or by a consultant. As might be expected, consultant costs are generally higher but in the long run may be more cost-efficient, depending on your in-house staff resources. Typical costs include:

1. Rental of airplane and photographer
2. Labor
3. Material

Presentation—Proper display and use of exhibits is, of course, as important as careful preparation. It is suggested that the following be kept in mind:

- As with all visual aids, aerial displays and maps should be set up before the meeting or hearing begins. This not only prevents valuable meeting/hearing time from being unnecessarily consumed, it also allows early arrivals to examine the exhibits beforehand.

- Always place your exhibit in a well-lit area.

- Do not prop your exhibit against a wall. If it is not free-standing, support it on one or more easels.

- Allow sufficient space in front of the exhibit so people can mill about.

- When referring to an exhibit during a presentation, stand near it but off to one side. Avoid positioning yourself in front of an exhibit.

- Talk to your audience during the presentation, not to the exhibit.

- Make sure you are totally familiar with the exhibit, particularly if you are to refer to it during the presentation. Lack of familiarity can result in erratic, awkward delivery that is uncomfortable for both you and the audience.

2. Slide presentations

A conscientiously produced and well-coordinated slide program is among the most effective means of communicating and clarifying technical information to a lay audience. In opting for slide presentations, most agencies point to the following:

- They generally result in a crisp and smooth-flowing presentation that can be appropriately tailored to fit a given time frame.

- They are able to capture and maintain audience attention and interest.

- Equipment for preparing and presenting slides is readily available.

Slides have built-in flexibility. They can easily be removed from or added to a program, and their sequence can be changed to suit a variety of purposes.

- They are easy to update and duplicate.

- They are easy to manage. Slides can be handled and stored without difficulty.
- Slides can effectively be shown to any size group.
- They tend to unify a program by permitting the agency to focus on graphs, charts, maps, and other elements of the audio-visual presentation.
- Further flexibility comes with use of presentation software that makes it easy to generate graphically appealing slides. The slides produced on such programs can either be presented with standard slide projection equipment or through use of special laptop-type hardware that allows very sophisticated layering and sequencing of elements in a slide (a simple example is showing a sequence of bulleted items one by one rather than all at once). **Figure 5-1** shows two fairly simple slides produced with a presentation software package. They combine a visual image with a minimum amount of text. **Figure 5-2** shows two slides from a sequence also produced on computer, using the "master slide" function to create ongoing elements (in this case a logo and horizontal line)—an easy process in most presentation software.

However, like other visual media, slides are not a panacea. To be effective, they must be clear, relevant, and technically perfect. If poorly produced and/or handled, they can seriously detract from an otherwise well-planned meeting or hearing. In addition, slides have the following inherent disadvantages:

- A pre-recorded program is a rather impersonal approach that may be offensive to some members of your audience.
- Slides must be shown in a room suited to the equipment being used.
- Since slides are generally shown in a completely darkened facility, they limit the effectiveness of handouts as a companion to the agency presentation.

Before selecting slides as your principal audio-visual technique, it is therefore important to evaluate your agency's ability to script, photograph, edit, and process a professional presentation. This requires substantial ongoing planning, as well as a minimum time frame of four weeks. It is essential to initially determine that slides will, in fact, significantly contribute to your meeting. They should only be used as a means of facilitating communication—never simply because of their "gimmick" appeal or dramatic effect.

Once you have decided to use slides, it is time to focus on the following:

- ***Your prospective audience.*** What kind of presentation would be best suited to the expected meeting/hearing participants? Avoid including too much elementary data for a more sophisticated group or too much technical data for an audience that has only a rudimentary understanding of the subject.
- ***Development of an appropriate script.*** The first step in producing a slide show is preparation of a comprehensive script. Shooting should never begin until the script has been carefully reviewed and edited. Once you are satisfied with a

Exhibit 5-1: TWO SLIDES USING VISUAL AND TEXT

Techniques, continued

- Project office
- Newsletters
- Fact sheets
- Free-standing displays
- Media

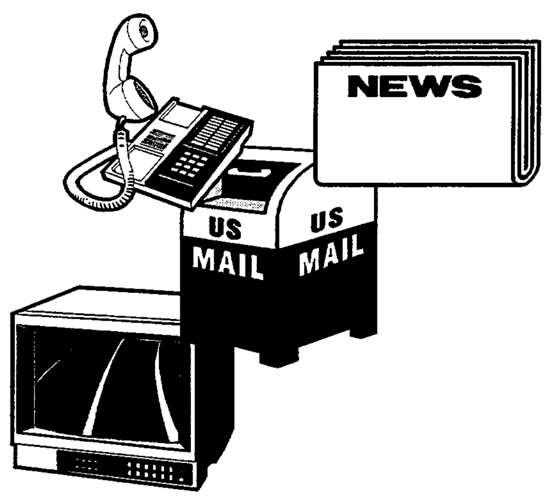
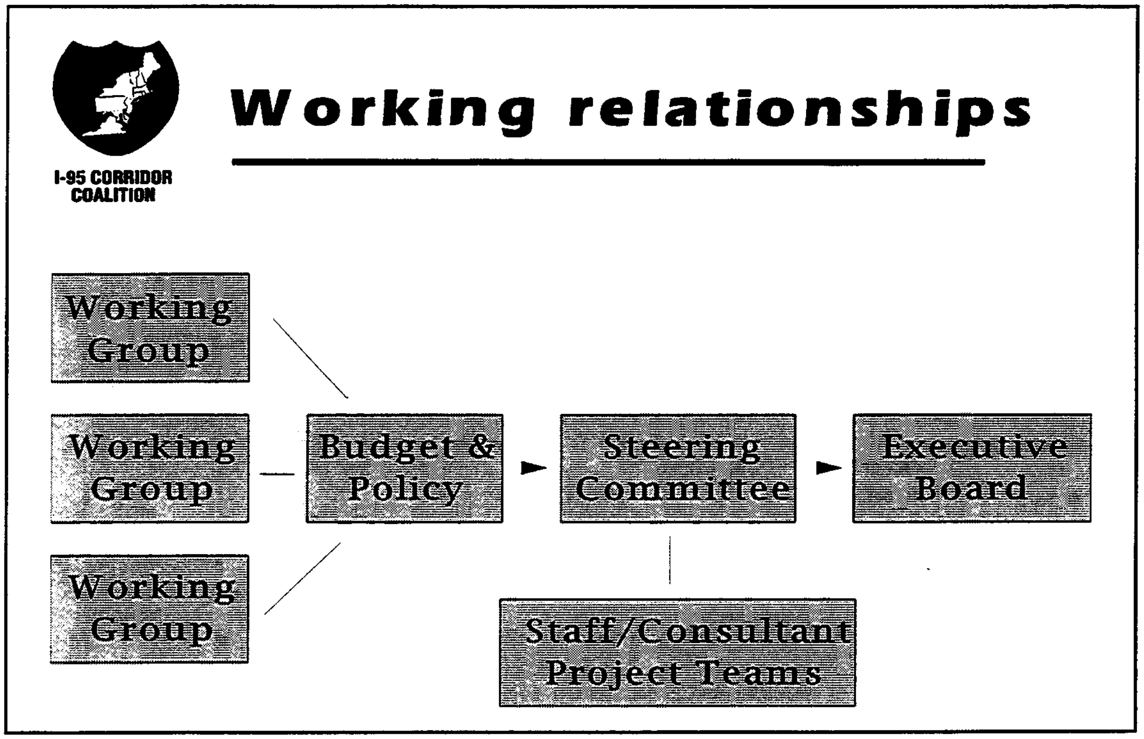
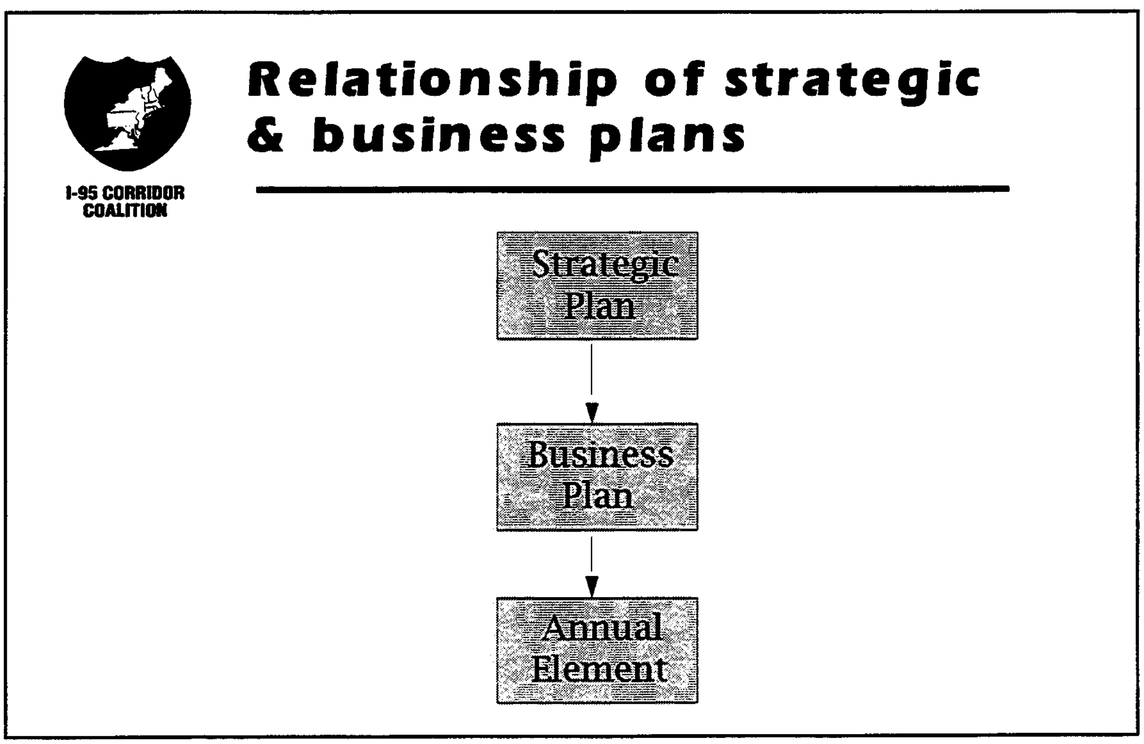


Exhibit 5-2: TWO SLIDES USING "MASTER" ELEMENTS





script, use it to guide your picture-taking. This procedure is both time- and cost-effective.

- ***Development of an appropriate number of relevant slides.*** Few things turn off or distract an audience more than irrelevant slides. Make sure each slide pertains to the subject and contributes to the specific objective of the meeting.

  It is equally important to limit your presentation to a reasonable number of slides. A lengthy program runs the risk of losing the attention of the audience. *Remember:* Slides should not be the only means of conveying information; instead, they should complement a verbal presentation that, by itself, would be too long and/or unclear.

- ***Production of clear, well-defined slides.*** Slides that are of poor quality reflect an unprofessional effort on the part of the agency. Before any work begins, carefully check out the equipment and the experience and capabilities of all involved personnel.

Your most significant preliminary decision relating to slide preparation is undoubtedly determining a format for your program. Basically, a slide program can be presented in either one of two ways:

1. The slides can be accompanied and described by an agency representative acting as a narrator; or

2. The agency can prepare a slide-tape (impulse tape) program. Use of a narrator is the more popular and oft-used approach, as well as the less expensive. At appropriate points in the reading of a prepared script, the narrator or assistant merely has to press a remote-control button to advance the slides.

On the other hand, a slide-tape program offers the advantage of a pre-recorded narrative that can be structured to fit a carefully defined time frame. Slides are advanced either manually according to audible or visible "cues" or automatically via a tape recorder-projector synchronizer.

The equipment needed to produce a slide presentation is detailed below:

1. ***Standard slide program*** (slides plus narrator):

Camera	—	Although just about any type of camera suffices, a 35mm is preferred because of its flexibility and quality. If you are not experienced in using a 35mm camera, find an agency staffer who is.
Film	—	Color film is preferred, because it is more interesting. Ask your photo supply dealer about the proper film for the conditions you will encounter.
Additional lenses	—	If you want to zero in on a small graphic, you will need a close-up lens. There may also be times

		when you need a telephoto lens for outdoor shots.
Tripod	—	A tripod helps keep your camera steady and level at all times.
Copy stand	—	A copy stand is a valuable assist for mounting your camera for taking close-up shots.
Floodlights or camera-mounted flash	—	Whichever approach you choose, be sure your film is compatible with the type of lighting. This holds true even if you use the sun as a source of light.
Projector and screen	—	It is advisable to use a professional, heavy-duty slide projector. If possible, avoid a less durable carousel projector, since it is designed for general consumer or "home" use. Both the projector and screen should be compatible with the room and audience size.
Dissolve control	—	A dissolve control can manipulate as many as fifteen projectors. Its most practical use is with two projectors, whereby it can slowly fade the image from one while bringing in the other. This approach is easier on the viewers' eyes, as they are not faced with the continuous shifts from bright to darkness and darkness to bright that occur when slides are changed.

2. ***Recorded slide program*** (additional equipment needs)

Tape recorder	—	A tape recorder can be used in conjunction with a slide program with or without a synchronizer. If you do not use a synchronizer, you need someone sitting near the projector to change the slides. You may use audible cues on the tape or markings on a copy of the script to indicate when each slide should be advanced.
Synchronizer	—	A tape recorder-projector synchronizer lends a degree of professionalism to your program. Responding to inaudible cues placed on the tape during production, the synchronizer automatically changes your slides. The "impulse tape" approach was used with great effectiveness by one southern state in a slide program that focused on slides and their effective usage.

KEEP COSTS IN MIND

Producing a slide-tape program can be costly if the necessary equipment is not available within your agency. If you need to "farm out" your slide-tape program, be sure to solicit several bids for equipment rental and sound production.

Here is a list of some costs incurred for sound production:
Recording (2 hours or more);
"Pulsing" the tape from the script;
4 M-8 Telex cartridges.

Equipment rental costs include the following:
Projector
2 spare lamps
4-track synch unit
Microphone and stand
Projection stand

3. ***Computer-generated slide program*** (additional equipment needs)

Computer	—	To create the presentation electronically.
Software	—	Presentation software packages allow you to select a graphic style, type faces, and formats for slide shows, as well as for overheads and display boards.
Scanner (optional)	—	Allows you to put photos, drawings, or other illustrations into electronic form, where the images can then be manipulated or produced in slide or other form.
Lap-top-mounted projector (optional)	—	Placed on a lap-top computer, this allows you to project slides directly from a computer.

Presentation tips.—The following suggestions may be helpful as you prepare to present your slide program:

- Always set up your equipment before the meeting or hearing begins. This not only saves time but also helps maintain a degree of continuity.
- If your program calls for more than 80 slides, use two projectors. Slide trays with 180 slots tend to jam and should be avoided, whenever possible.
- If a narrator is to be used, place him/her near the screen.
- Stress consistent delivery. Make sure the text and the slides are well synchron-

ized. Above all, avoid having to turn the house lights on more than twice during the presentation, since this is extremely distracting.

- Before presenting the program, determine an appropriate length of time for each slide to be on the screen. For example, a technical slide should be projected long enough to be absorbed and understood by an audience relatively unfamiliar with the subject matter.

  On the other hand, a non-technical or overly simplified slide should remain on the screen for only a few seconds. Longer projection tends to be frustrating and insulting to an audience.

  Also, make sure that at no point does the speaker complete a discussion and move to another point without the appropriate slide being projected.

For a step-by-step description of the processes involved in producing and presenting a slide or a slide-tape program, you might consult pamphlets from various equipment manufacturers, as well as material in your local library.

3. Models

Three-dimensional scale models are the ultimate self-explanatory audio-visual aid. By clearly depicting the relationship of a proposed transportation facility to such personal reference points as homes, places of business, and community facilities, they create a virtually self-contained environment between viewer and exhibit. By answering many of the routine questions generally asked at community meetings, they significantly decrease the number of agency staff members who must attend.

On the other hand, the advantages of using scale models are often counterbalanced by their disadvantages. Preparation is a cost- and time-consuming activity that requires the skills of a professional model-maker. Transportation of the finished product is an equally complicated task, since most models must be taken apart to be moved. Their usefulness is therefore limited by size, bulk, and inflexibility.

CASE IN POINT

One agency reports that it took 3 model-makers 6 months and over $18,000 to produce a scale model of a 13.5-mile project. The model was only used twice—at a pre-hearing information session and at the hearing itself. It was then disassembled, returned to the agency, and reassembled as a lobby display.

Notwithstanding, a few agencies report that they occasionally develop three-dimensional scale models for particularly complex projects that have aroused a good deal of community interest and/or controversy. Production of a model generally involves reconstruction of the area in miniature on an aerial photograph or contour map.

In making a contour map, contour lines are traced on cardboard, cut out in jigsaw-puzzle fashion, and placed so that differences in terrain can be reproduced to an exact scale. Built with upson board, a light-weight material, the models include replicas of buildings (created with plaster of Paris and paint), as well as trees and grassy fields constructed of sponge, sand, and paint.

Although we obviously do not recommend models for general-use purposes, they should be kept in mind for those rare occasions when a complicated situation must be represented in a universally comprehensible manner.

4. Charts, graphs, and tables

Charts, tables, graphs, and diagrams are popular and effective means by which most agencies supplement their major meeting and hearing displays. They are commonly used to convey a variety of information, including construction schedules, transportation planning and design processes, public involvement processes, project funding, agency structure, traffic or transit ridership characteristics, and—in particular—comparative data such as alternative costs, impacts, roadway or track lengths and right-of-way requirements. Charts and graphs can be generated directly, quickly, and easily by computer from data on a spreadsheet. **Exhibit 5-3** shows how a set of data can be presented in two different ways: as a table and as a bar graph. While certain types of data lend themselves more readily to specific kinds of charts or graphs, computers make it easy to switch from one to another if the result is unsatisfactory.

In addition to their value as a meeting exhibit, these supplemental aids are particularly effective when reduced and used as handouts. As handouts, they serve as readily available reference sheets both during and after a presentation.

In developing supplementary displays, keep three key principles in mind:

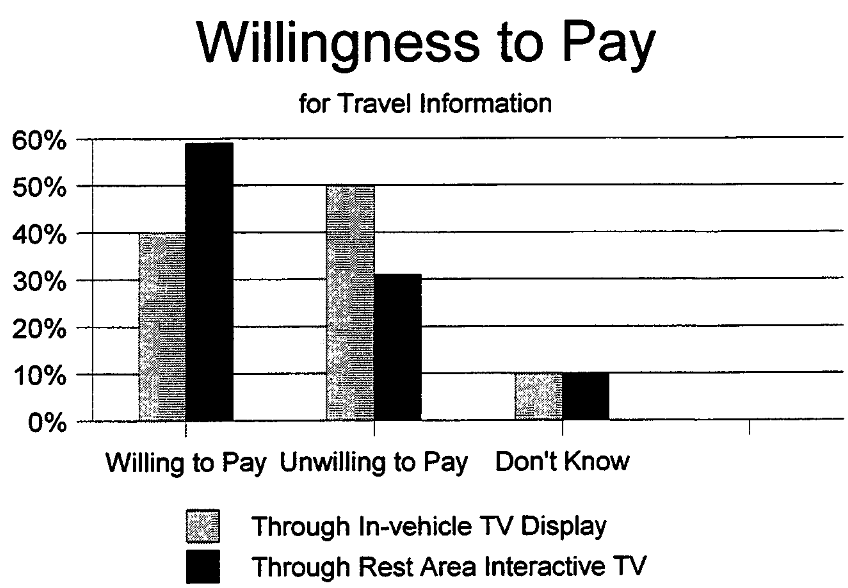
- ***Make sure the displays are self-explanatory.*** The whole purpose of presenting statistical and/or comparative data is defeated if a lay person cannot fully understand the exhibit. A hint in this regard: Avoid the use of flow diagrams. Although excellent for internal agency purposes, they are generally too confusing for public meetings.

- ***Always use charts, tables, graphs, and diagrams as supporting aids.*** They are inappropriate and usually ineffective as a primary exhibit. *Remember:* Their purpose is to elaborate upon, describe, or support your alternatives displays.

- ***Make your supplemental exhibits as colorful and visually interesting as possible.*** Since charts, tables, graphs, and diagrams are sometimes dry and visually unappealing, the use of color and good design can significantly add to their impact and help clarify their content. Case in point: One agency color-coded an exhibit of a proposed construction schedule to coincide with the colors used in its aerial exhibit to describe various segments of a proposed road. The result was a clear, self-explanatory display that also unified a number of essential but disparate project components.

Exhibit 5-3: DATA PRESENTED AS TABLE AND BAR GRAPH

WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR TRAVELER INFORMATION			
	Willing to Pay	**Not Willing to Pay**	**Don't Know**
Through In-vehicle TV Display	40%	50%	10%
Through Rest Area Interactive TV	59%	31%	10%



5. "Realistic" representations of the completed project

Attempts to satisfy the public's curiosity have, over the years, resulted in development of a number of techniques for depicting the end-product of the transportation planning and design process. Conceptual drawings of the "constructed" facility are often used as supplemental exhibits at meetings and hearings. With the ongoing development of computer graphic technology, such representations are becoming increasingly more scientific and more reflective of what may be anticipated.

"Realistic" representations were, at one point, limited to artists' renderings. Though such renderings provided an attractive meeting or hearing exhibit, they are costly, require specialized artistic skills, and tend to represent concept as a glamorous, "artistic" reality. Today, many agencies display artists' renderings infrequently, if at all.

Instead, some agencies have turned to airbrush renderings. These are pictures of the proposed transportation facility that involve touching up 35mm photographs or aerials of a project area to incorporate the "finished" facility. Airbrush renderings are less costly. Although this technique improves on artists' renderings by more effectively relating the proposed facility to its surrounding community, it retains the inherent danger of substituting concept for reality.

Recently, a much more accurate technique—photomontage—has become the focus of attention. Photomontage is reflective of a day and age in which the transportation planner and engineer make increased efforts to adequately communicate transportation concepts visually to the lay public. Because of its technical accuracy, photomontage has the potential of eventually being used as an agency's primary meeting or hearing exhibit. As described in *Highway Photomontage Manual,* Report No. FHWA-DP-40-1 of the U.S. Department of Transportation, photomontage "...combines a computer perspective drawing of a design with a photograph of the alignment. The result is an accurate and clearly understandable picture of how the road will look after constructed." Relatively inexpensive, this technique can be incorporated into an agency's design process with little training. The major limiting factor is availability of computer time.

For orientation purposes only, we are providing the following outline of the basic procedure for producing a photomontage. For a more detailed step-by-step description, see the USDOT manual referenced above.

1. Subsequent to a thorough project review and a determination that no adequate photographs of the alignment exist, pictures of the alignment are taken from a high-level ground view or a low-level oblique aircraft view.

2. The film negatives are processed, the most suitable views of the alignment selected, and enlargements made.

3. The camera coordinates, the sighted point coordinates, and camera orientation are determined. This procedure includes all aspects of preparing the raw data for computer processing.

4. The design earthwork and template converter programs are run through the computer.

5. The perspective plot program is run through the computer.

6. The computer-generated plot is overlaid on the photograph to produce the photomontage.

7. The overlay is artistically enhanced, as required, to add a degree of realism to the finished product.

Before opting for photomontage, it is important to keep two essential facts in mind:

1. Since the technique relies on use of a computer, it can become very expensive unless computer time is available within the agency; and

2. Because effective photomontage utilizes completed design drawings, its value as a developmental exhibit during a project's location phase is marginal at best.

At the high-technology end of the spectrum are computer simulations and interactive graphic displays.

6. Films and videotape

Generally speaking, films are inappropriate for use as the audio-visual component of a public involvement program. Although film is an excellent technique for training and agency self-evaluation, a number of built-in characteristics limit its usefulness as a public involvement tool.

Theoretically, the dramatic, dynamic quality of film suggests that it is an excellent medium for presenting a technical project to a lay audience. However, film is just too expensive, too time-consuming, and too dependent on a variety of specialized talent and equipment to be considered a practical public involvement technique.

Unlike film, videotape is relatively inexpensive. However, its usefulness in a public involvement program is somewhat limited, since it can only be effectively shown to a small group of people (ideally no more than 15). Agencies are increasingly using videotape either in kiosks in a lobby to orient and attract participants or in separate, small viewing areas to illustrate alternatives in an attractive and dynamic pictorial form. Effective videotapes are kept short to maintain audience interest. Although videotapes can be produced in-house cheaply, the result may be amateurish. Professional production is expensive and demands careful agency review to assure accuracy. Also, it is often more cost-effective in the long run.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout this guidebook, we stress the need for an individualized approach to the preparation, conduct, and follow-up of public meetings and hearings. The theme that emerges repeatedly is that a successful public meeting or hearing requires flexibility, thorough planning, and attention to detail. Its chances of success are also enhanced when creative thinking is applied to all aspects of the event, including the substance, format, and presentation materials.

This theme cannot be overstated! Our years of public involvement experience have clearly demonstrated that it is only through experimentation, analysis, and evaluation of each individual plan or project and its parameters that an appropriate combination of meeting/hearing components can ever be determined.

Fortunately, our efforts to develop effective public involvement programs need not be conducted in isolation. By adopting an historical perspective, we can learn much from the activities of highway and transportation agencies during the past few years. The guidelines and criteria that emerge from their experiences are valuable aids in constructing a public involvement program that is comprehensive, appropriate, and specifically oriented to the goals and objectives of both agency and community.

Consequently, this guidebook aims to present all aspects of public meetings and hearings in a realistic framework that highlights not only individual advantages and disadvantages but also combinations that may be particularly effective in a given situation. Notification techniques, graphics, handouts, and other specific elements have been introduced as part of an evolving process that also includes such activities as identification of objectives, site selection, and agenda preparation.

Most importantly, we point out that meetings and hearings should never be dealt with as isolated occurrences. As part of a continuum of events, they assume meaning only if they reflect an agency's ongoing concern and careful consideration of such factors as project characteristics; potential social, environmental, and economic effects; community characteristics; and agency resources and constraints in the areas of budget, time, and personnel.

As we look toward the future of public involvement, it is clear that the responsibilities of its practitioners will become increasingly complex and extensive. We hope this guidebook will provide both assistance and encouragement to the cadre of specialists preparing to meet the constantly evolving challenges of effective public interaction.

Appendix 1:
CHECKLIST OF MEETING PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

The following checklist has been included as a handy reference tool, to be used when preparing for a public meeting. It is a composite of the tasks and subtasks discussed in **Chapter 1.**

______ Become thoroughly familiar with the proposed project and its geographic area.

______ Define the goals and objectives of the meeting.

______ Define the project community.

______ Take inventory of in-house resources and limitations (including budget, people power, time, and equipment).

______ Develop a project mailing list.

______ Determine the meeting format.

______ Select a site, date, and time for the meeting.

______ Inspect the proposed meeting site.

______ Confirm the meeting site in writing.

______ Finalize all administrative details (including paperwork related to insurance, fees, licenses, parking, custodial services, and security provisions).

______ Select and begin to prepare appropriate displays, handouts, and audiovisual aids.

______ Identify the meeting panel, select a conductor, and firm up overall staffing arrangements.

______ Begin to prepare the technical presentation. Determine how and by whom it will be given.

______ Establish and formalize the guidelines and procedures for meeting conduct (including time limits, speaking order, and recording techniques).

______ Select and begin to prepare appropriate notification documents.

______ Develop the meeting agenda.

______ Review displays, handouts, and audiovisual aids and revise as necessary.

Appendix 1: CHECKLIST OF MEETING PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

- ______ Finalize and distribute notification documents.
- ______ Conduct an in-house briefing.
- ______ Revise the technical presentation, if necessary.
- ______ Test all audiovisual equipment to make sure it is in good working order.
- ______ Arrange for the transport, display, and/or use of exhibits, handouts, audiovisual equipment, and other meeting aids.

Appendix 2:
CHECKLIST OF HEARING PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

The following checklist has been included as a basic guide, to be used when preparing for a public hearing. It represents an outline of the activities discussed in **Chapter 2.**

______ Revise and update the project mailing list.

______ Take inventory of in-house resources and limitations (including budget, people power, time, and equipment).

______ Determine the hearing format.

______ Establish and formalize the guidelines and procedures for hearing conduct (including time limits, speaking order, and recording techniques).

______ Establish and formalize the procedures for attendee and speaker registration (including paperwork and follow-up of correspondence related to pre-registration of speakers, if appropriate).

______ Select site(s), date(s), and time(s) for the hearing.

______ Select site(s), date(s), and time(s) for the pre-hearing information session(s).

______ Inspect the proposed hearing and pre-hearing information session sites. Confirm in writing.

______ Finalize all administrative details (including paperwork related to insurance, fees, licenses, parking, custodial services, and security provisions.

______ Develop the hearing agenda.

______ Select and begin to prepare appropriate notification documents. *Remember that the formal notice and/or paid ad must be published at least 15 days prior to the hearing—and quite possible 30-40 days prior.*

______ Prepare and update displays, handouts, and audiovisual aids. *Remember to leave enough time to adequately prepare slides, tapes, models, films, and other presentation materials that involve lengthy, locked-in time frames.*

______ Select a hearing officer and finalize all hearing and pre-hearing staffing arrangements.

______ Arrange for the services of a court stenographer, if appropriate. Confirm in writing.

Appendix 2: CHECKLIST OF HEARING PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

______ Begin to prepare the technical presentation. Determine how and by whom it will be given.

______ Finalize and distribute all supplementary notification documents.

______ Review displays, handouts, and audiovisual aids and revise as necessary.

______ Brief the hearing officer, if appropriate.

______ Conduct an in-house briefing.

______ Revise the technical presentation, if necessary.

______ Test all audiovisual equipment to make sure it is in good working order.

______ Arrange for the transport, display, and/or use of exhibits, handouts, audiovisual equipment, and other hearing aids.

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